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FRANCIS BURGER

2010

THE INDULGENCE AND EXHAUSTION OF  
THE MEANINGLESS VOICE

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The Indulgence and Exhaustion of the Meaningless Voice

Ms Francis Burger (BRGFRA005)


A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Fine Art (FIN5004W)

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2010

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: 

Date: 15/12/2010

BUT 140 BURC  
871602

\* The following document forms part of a larger project submitted in July 2010 at the Michaelis School of Fine Art towards the completion of a Masters degree in Fine Art.

Designed to function as an interactive whole,  
the project consisted of:

a box  
(part B)



a chronology  
(part C)



and an index of  
keywords  
(part A)



as well as a general introduction in the form of a users guide. This document is a combination of the chronology (C) and the index of keywords (A). The contents of the box (B) are documented within the chronology.

Please refer to the user's guide (appendix A) for a more detailed description of the above.

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pg.

### **CHRONOLOGY**

#### **Year**

2010	5
2009	87
2008	293

#### **Separable documents within the chronology (additional points of interest)**

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Go home and play with your genitals/All and nothing, 2010. Collaborative text produced with Barend de Wet, Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg as the Trustees.	53
Dada South? timeline, 2009. Timeline produced with Serialworks for the Dada South? exhibition at the IZIKO South African National Gallery (12.12.2009 - 28.02.2010. Curated by Kathryn Smith and Roger van Wyk with Lerato Bereng.)	93
Conglomerates, 2009. Booklet produced for a formal crit at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts.	129
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You just knew that something good was going to happen, 2009. Collaborative text produced with Christian Nerf.	203
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Art as a solution, an exercise in problem solving, 2009. Collaborative booklet produced with Anja de Klerk.	269
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Master of nothing, 2008. Seminar paper presented as part of the MFA seminar program at the Michaelis School of Fine Art.	340

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"The completion of this project as a Masters of Fine Art between 2008 and 2010 was supported by the National Research Foundation and the University of Cape Town.



University of Cape Town, Private Bag X3,  
Rondebosch 7701, South Africa

**2010**

"keep your mouth shut"...

"But even Cyclops had an eye, 'and what an eye...'"  
(Lotringer citing Homer in Lotringer & Virilio 2005: 67).

body (eye); Sylvere Lotringer; Homer; things that  
are round (sphere)

(Above) excerpt from Lotringer & Virilio (2005: 67).



stones; things that are roundish; states of being  
(definitely full); repetition; painting and drawing  
from memory

(Immediately above) drawing of a stone found by  
Willem Boshoff when he was in high school.



geography (sea); states of being (dynamic);  
things that are round (whirlpool)

(Immediately above) card issued by United Tobacco  
Companies, no.4 ('Do you know what causes a  
whirlpool?') in a series of 50.



slapstick; funny stuff; coagitation

(Right) card issued by Max Cigarettes, no.151  
('Swiss misunderstanding') in a series of 250.

MARCEL PROUST  
STACY HARDY  
NTOBE EDJABE  
KATHRYN SMITH  
JEAN LACATHEE  
TACQUES LACAN  
SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK  
J.A. MILLER  
FOUCAULT  
BORRINO  
M. WILHELM BOSSHOF  
BEEZY BAILLY  
BALDRE BURWITZ  
POSSESSION ARTS  
JOACHIM SCHÖNBERG  
JOHN NANKIN  
NOM NEIL GEDONALS  
ORSON WELLES  
ELIYAH DE MORY  
JOHN IRVING  
CLIFFORD  
DAN PERTOVSKI  
LORNA FERGUSON  
WILLIAM CENTRIFUGAL  
VIRIAN COHEN  
MILAN KUNDERA  
SILVIA DE SERRA  
SIMON STALLINA  
GEORGE GROZ  
GUTAI GROUP  
THI BOP CENTRE  
ALLAN KAPRON  
CESARE PIETRI  
ARTHUR CRAWAN  
LOUISE A. WALTER  
GEORGE BAKER  
SOL LE WITT  
BRUCE NAUMAN  
HAROLD SZEGMAN  
CHRISTIAN NERF  
BART DE BIERE  
WIM DELVOYE  
EVAENB MARAIS  
MILES KEYLOCK  
PETE PIGNAR  
KRYSTOF WODZICKO  
GILBERT AGOORE  
MARLENE TISSONY  
JOAN MITEE  
MELANIE KLEIN  
ANDREW LOGVIN  
(ORANGE PROJECT)  
DUNGO BOPABE  
(IVOR POWELL)  
BAREND BOKETT  
DAVID SHIRLEY  
OLAF BRENNING  
JONATHAN GREENHAM  
DOUG TOTH, TUNNEL  
ZAYD MINTY  
NICE CAVE  
JANE ALEXANDER  
BRIDGET BAKER  
DAVID BYRNE  
BRIAN ENO  
GUILLIOTTE  
CAMERON PLATTER  
ANDREW AND  
LARRY (FANTASY)  
JAMES BROADWAYERS  
JOHN CAGE  
JOSEPH BUYS  
RICHARD HAMILTON  
WIELA REICH  
CHRISTIAN MARLEY  
FRED DE VRIES  
SINCLAIR BEILES  
TALIS  
WOLF WEINER  
TOLA EUTI  
HARRI LUX  
BEN VAVUTER  
JOE SARANAGO  
AUS DE KLOEK  
AFRIANO  
GEORGE BRECHT  
JOE POSTER  
DAVID VAN VUREN  
KABE  
WOLFO JENNA  
FELIX LABAND  
VIRGINIA MCKENNY  
JACK KEROUAC  
SIMON ALLEN  
JEAN MICHEL JEAN  
PIPOLITTI RIST  
JANGO LEINHART

cacolydates; geography (constellation); surface; positions (hero); positions (scoundrel);  
positions (cowboy); positions (artist); positions (hysteric); positions (genius); positions  
(romantic); positions (quack); positions (narcissist); positions (outsider); positions  
(insider); masters vs. daddies; architecture (exedra); intersection points

An incomplete, subjective, and highly idealised genealogy of 'orphan thinkers' (see Massumi  
in Deleuze & Guattari 1987: xi).



**Anja de Klerk; geography (constellation); architecture (cockpit); states of being (definitely full); repetition; monstration; propaganda; art as an exercise in problem solving; gold; direction**

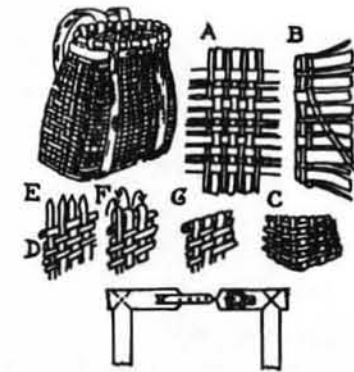
(Above) front sides of business cards printed by Anja de Klerk showing different views of her studio pin-board in 2008.

In 1927, the jazz singer Al Johnson, who was white, painted himself in black-face. And the first word he said was: "Hello baby, hello Mom." It's really extraordinary. Hi Mom!

*It was a farewell to silence.*

**Sylvère Lotringer; Paul Virilio; voice; utterances; history**

Excerpt from Lotringer and Virilio (2005: 67)  
on the first words spoken on screen (the Jazz Singer was the first 'talkie' film to be screened in cinema).



**holes; excipient; theory vs. practice; craft (hobby); something to do**

(Above) found image on how to make a pack-basket.

old s with  
of (Hollis) book - published in 1989 then a quote  
Safety, danger, fear, hysterical  
writing (as an academic) as a  
way to venture ideas that we are  
not artists (the truth doesn't  
speak through us)

Hollis.

own-couch-psychoanalysis  
→ field of engagement limited  
to self-analysis; (and)  
∴ excludes the real - as  
an accessible area  
in any given context/reference

**psychoanalysis (as a suggestion); art as a diversion; positions (artist); Dennis Hollier; positions (analysis)**

(Immediately above) note on Dennis Hollier's *Against Architecture* (1989) and the phenomenon of being on one's own couch.



04,  
2010

something to believe in; something to do; epiphany; Don Quixote; circular performance; states of being (dynamic); positions (martyr); positions (cowboy); voice; language (as performative); truth; lies; language (as excess); fool's gold; love; accident; restraint; the cost of action; states of being (static); resistivity; art; craft; positions (artificer); monstration; honky tonking; art as a swamp; body

(Immediately below) keywords describing a shift from investing in art and activity in general as something to believe in to something to do.

*A shift from looking for:*

something to believe in (in defense of lost causes, Don Quixote, circular performance (dynamic) martyrs, battles, voice, body (grumbling), spirit, life, noise, action words, lies, rhetoric, truth, fool's gold, love, drama)

to

something to do (truth, restraint, slow inaccurate and almost imperceptible movement, resistivity, hovering, voice, resignation, duty, body, organs, genitals, whispering, silence, death, creativity, gardening, craft, artificer, words with jobs, doing, showing, saying, more or less, honky-tonking, confusion, swamp, open brackets, everything.

dancing bear; a deer exists a unicorn exists; animals (bear); animals (horse)

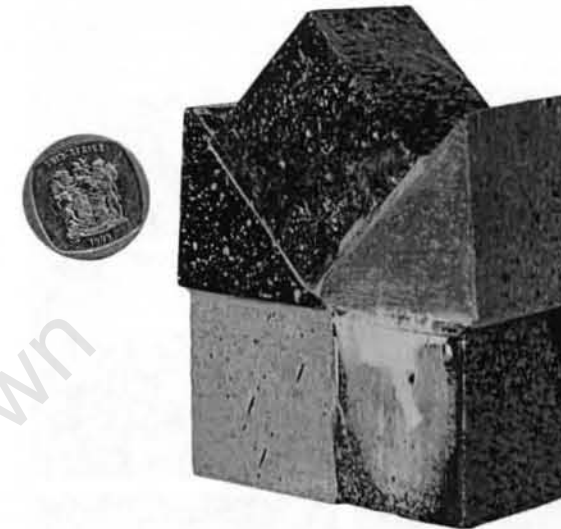
(Right) pencil on paper.



**Aristotle; Donald Palmer; rocks**

(Below) Aristotle in Palmer (1994:79).

"Falling rocks accelerate because they are happy to be getting home" (Aristotle in Palmer 1994: 79).

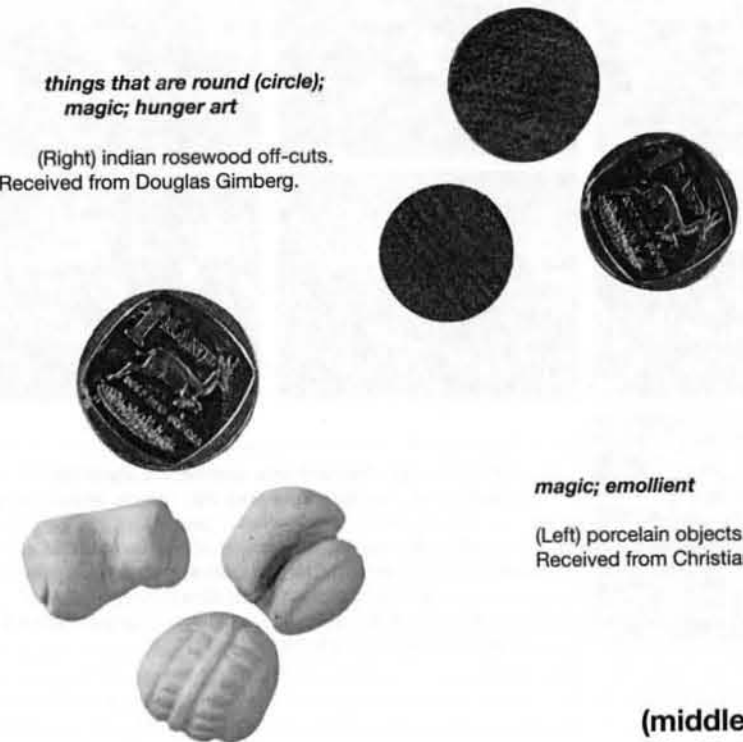


unit; architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb); early learning

(Left) balsa wood, enamel, spray-paint and resin.

things that are round (circle);  
magic; hunger art

(Right) indian rosewood off-cuts.  
Received from Douglas Gimberg.



magic; emollient

(Left) porcelain objects.  
Received from Christian Nerf.

(top) B.B.86.  
(middle-right) B.B.80.8.  
(bottom-left) B.B.80.6.



*trustees; coagitation; art as a swamp; cacolydates; surrender; box; architecture (exedra); failure; experiment*

Documentation from an experiment with a box and canvas sheets by the Trustees (Douglas Gimberg, Barend de Wet, Francis Burger and Christian Nerf). (The box was rotated clockwise in two minute intervals offering each participant the opportunity to censor the others.)

*Antonin Artaud; Douglas Gimberg; Samuel Beckett; Marcel Proust; Gilles Deleuze; Martin Heidegger; the question as a problem; explanation; language (as excess); voice; dead ends; circular performance; things that are round (arguments); the image of thought; nihilism; coagitation; the cost of action; weak logic; desire; positions (valetudinarian); pricks; productive confusion; the logic of the supplement; states of being (dynamic); the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice; box; miscommunication; cacolydates; art as a diversion; zigzag; explanation; the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice*

(Below and following pages) rough collection of notes on *The indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice*.

"Or it's my voice too weak at times. The one that comes out of me. So much for the art and craft" (Beckett 2006: 365).

*What it is:* a fragmented assemblage of words, citations, propositions, dead language, sculptures, announcements, thoughts, tools, living and dead ideas, utterances, found objects, descriptions, missing pieces, scraps, drawings, diagrams, half-dug holes and unrepaired cracks. It is housed in its entirety in a wooden box.

The contents of the box are a collection of leftovers generated over a two and a half year period. In this way, the project and its contents can be read according to the logic of a superstition – a stubborn remainder that stands over and continues to affirm its existence beyond reasonable doubt and in spite of evidence pointing to the contrary.

Though this logic can only fit the dynamics of the project up until a certain point it assists in emphasizing a strategy for reading its content (each object, be it a sculpture, a text, an argument or a drawing, functions primarily as a self-sustaining and self-justifying utterance. Like the primary problem that this project attempts in part to grab hold of (the problem of justifying expression in general, from artistic practice to philosophy or writing in general, the problem of why to go on, how to go on, and what to go on with) these utterances can never be definitively exhausted. Similarly, they cannot be argued for or against, they do not exist by permission, they are there, remaining, standing over, subsisting, speaking, sitting, waiting. (It does not mean that they are strong, many hang by a thread and can, evidently, die by their own accord.)

They are self-revelatory in that what is revealed is identical to its revelation, and are also therefore difficult to explain without simply saying them again. They do their jobs and are active as utterances.

A researcher who has taken on a voluntary commission with no brief returns (having occupied an office on the premises for several months) with the contents of her pockets. She announces to an obligatory audience that like Antonin Artaud in his last public reading, what she has to tell them is not interesting, but that it's still research. She then asks, like him, what she can do to be truly sincere.

It tries, at least at times, to be very quiet, slow, painfully slow, every movement just a twitch – but this level of subtlety is evidently ever-elusive.

What it is is 'a coffin for the child of our two-year friendship' (Douglas Gimberg) and a self-perpetuating storage solution (hunger art). Weak logic, constraint and freedom.

Performativity of project as a whole (the gaps are not place-holders for missing pieces but for other pieces). Not doing anything properly (studio logic, dabbling, allowing oneself to be the master of none).

*How it was done/how it came about:* initial aim of an open, free associative space – recognition of writing as integral to practice – but space allocated to writing was/is received and/or put forward as supplementary and separable (the problem is not that writing doesn't count as art itself but that the writing that happens happens on the side, naming the unnamed before it has said its first word and allocating everything a space within the realm of the plausible) – general methods designed and assumed in order to counteract narrativizing/justifying tendencies: evasive strategies, sabotage, productive confusion and art as an exercise in problem solving – deconstruction as an impossible torch to bear, reconciling weak logic with strong rhetoric – hopelessness (desperate adoption of principles) – inability to speak/find a subject that would warrant 'research' / **nothing happens when nothing happens**, self-diagnosis (success) – ego (vanity) wanting to crack *something*, intensity + anxiety over invisible enemy + ego (excessive confusion and mismatched environment) – encountering all of these enlightening ideas and yet still surprised at how things continue to continue...

The attempt to sometimes exhaust and sometimes indulge the meaningless voice (processes which become almost interchangeable through their constant opposition to one another) is almost that thing that Beckett writes of, and which J.M. Coetzee (2006: xi) explains as an attempt to "concoct some verbal formula that will pin down and annihilate the unnamable residue of the self and thus at last achieve silence". It is this up to a point, but with none of its pungency (Beckett) or valiance (Coetzee on Beckett). The implementation of each, indulgence and exhaustion, is non-committal and locatable only in relation to particular states of being, though the idiosyncrasies are innumerable (the exhaustion is never valiant except in reference to itself as exhaustion at which point it has already turned into indulgence, the indulgence never knows what it is doing until it let's go and sees itself at which point it stops and begins the process anew).

**THE PROBLEM OF THE QUESTION:** A practical explanation of how the project can be made to work, how it can be used (or rather, how it can be of use) remains unspoken (and can potentially be met by a simple series of inoffensive and non-committal instructions, a how & what of each) (structural strategies).

A demand waiting within the question of how it can be used that cannot be met simply via instruction (one that has surfaced repeatedly throughout in spite of numerous attempts to skirt it). (It is fitting therefore that this last attempt to explain should finally answer and thereby silence it.) Having immediately exposed itself in the third phrasing of the question at hand (how the project can be of use), this demand is altogether more complicated in that it brings up the accursed question of 'why?'. The positioning of this question (in its crudest form) as a problem has been nagging at me from the outset and a large part of the project is marked by the exasperating dynamic that such a move generates through its constant attempts to evade and delegitimize its own subject while still being forced to employ it (effectively putting itself out of work). (In a loose way, the logic of this dynamic is similar that of the speaker in Samuel Beckett's *Unnamable* (1958) where the protagonist decides at a relatively early point in the monologue that there shall be no more questions:

"I'll ask no more questions, there are no more questions, I know none anymore. It issues from me, it fills me, clamours against my walls, it is not mine, I can't stop it, I can't prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me ... So it is I to speak, all alone, since I can't do otherwise. No, I am speechless. Talking of speaking, what if I went silent? What would happen to me? Worse than what is happening? But fie these are questions again. That is typical. I know no more questions and they keep pouring out of my mouth. I think I know what it is, it's to prevent the discourse from coming to an end, this futile discourse which is not credited to me and brings me not a syllable nearer silence. But now I am on my guard, I shall not answer them anymore, I shall not pretend any more to answer them" (Beckett 1958: 307).

Another familiar dilemma phrased by Beckett's *Unnamable* (and one which will necessarily remain unresolved) is the problem of locating the source of the question. 'Who, they?'. The enemy is felt but never sighted. Moreover, there is a growing, gnawing suspicion that the interpellator and interpellated are one and the same. Is it possible that this problem shares a bed with the problem of employing doubt as a sparkplug for thought that Deleuze speaks of in *Difference and Repetition* (1994: 130-139) (that romantically pragmatic process of radical doubt that razes every structure in sight only to build everything anew with the very same bricks, blessing each with recognition as it is placed and cementing it with the comfort of a 'good-nature' and affinity to the true)? How deeply ingrained is this 'image of thought', how badly is it needed in the first place, and how attached is the thought of thinking to the procedure of doubt? Do all investigations start with a question? It seems a ridiculously limp dead end (is it?) and I'm not in the mood for circling.

(Dilemma of art as research etc...where did the questions come from? Why it was necessary throughout to continuously confront the question of why?) The aim of the project is in fact simple...to rediscover the wheel (the point being that I am not and could never be capable of discovering the wheel, and am therefore still confused – the proper thing to say would therefore be that my project is about confusion?).

It is, in fact, the one thing at hand that can be offered (and it is indeed, amongst other things, what each object of this project has been taught to say from this point onwards and what each object is softly but persistently repeating).

"One should rather come to understand that it is exactly through the characterization of something as 'value' that it loses its dignity. This is to say that through the estimation of something as a value, one accepts what is evaluated as a mere object for the appreciation of man. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, much less when the objectivity has the character of value. All valuing, even when it values positively, subjectivizes the thing. It does not let

beings be, but makes them valuable as the object of its action" (Heidegger in Smith 1975: 335).

Having to answer this stupid question again and again. 'Why...?' 'So what...?' It renders everything finally useless, and my vanity has stepped up to finally deal with this one thing.

**Truth:** If there is something virtuous amongst all of this, it should technically be locatable within a discussion of the truth (though introducing it as such may have ruined its chances of survival already).

Nihilistic in certain senses; but not as an argument against it. It is nihilistic, but it's propositions are encouraging rather than debilitating.

The new (general critique, in the vein of stoicism, of the initial fraudulence of an a priori proof of existence: Rationalism, Cartesianism, Logical Positivism etc. as a fraudulent foundation).

Nietzsche's will to power and lying creatively: language functions by lying, by inventing similarities where there are few – but this lying is also the key to the inventive possibility of language where so-called 'literal language' becomes a subclass of poetic language (see Palmer 1994: 260-262), we misuse and pervert it all without discrimination and in equal measure.

**How do we stay in such a state, without reconciliation?**

We do not look for things to believe in but for things to do.

Laying self-oriented traps; "where self-imposed demands function as obstacles to be overcome in a display of wit and ingenuity" (Roberts 2001: sp).

Parapraxis (slips of the tongue, finding something else).

Phatic function (hello, can you hear me).

Vattimo + Paul Cilliers: weak thought.

Theory as real (forgetting and then being reminded; the gripping magnitude of de Saussure's arbitrary nature of the sign and the impossibility of communication between friends).

"But if love, for Proust, is a function of man's sadness, friendship is a function of his cowardice; and, if neither can be realized because of the impenetrability (isolation) of all that is not 'cosa mentale', at least the failure to possess may have the nobility of that which is tragic, whereas the attempt to communicate where no communication is possible is merely a simian vulgarity, or horribly comic, like the madness that holds a conversation with the furniture ... There is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication. Even on the rare occasions when word and gesture happen to be valid expressions of personality, they lose their significance on their passage through the cataract of the personality that is opposed to them" (Beckett 1958: 538).



**positions**  
(Right) List of positions.

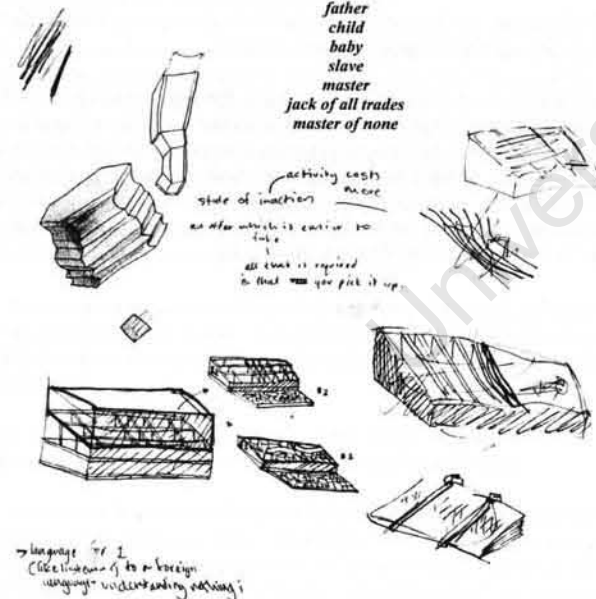
(Acephalus)  
"Man will escape his head as a  
conduit escapes his prison"  
  
"losing your head, chance + the 3rd  
without the head's veneer of  
something extreme/radical/  
significant happening as a result"  
  
"the only way for man to escape  
the architectural chain gang is to  
escape his form, to lose his head"  
(Hollier 1992: xii)

**positions (acephalous);  
Kendell Geers; Dennis Hollier**

(Immediately above) note with  
excerpt from Hollier (1992: xii).

**box; the cost of action;  
language (private);  
repetition**

(Right) drawings and  
notes.



**positions:**

bachelor  
fool  
don quixote  
madman  
hysteric  
paranoiac  
aphasiac  
martyr  
embarrassment  
failure  
fraud  
liar  
beggar  
shepherd  
preacher  
teacher  
writer  
artist  
critic  
conspirator  
prisoner  
idealist  
nihilist  
alcoholic  
academic  
enemy  
supporter  
deserter  
opportunist  
intellectual  
cynic  
idiot  
pedant  
loser  
chief  
executioner  
mother  
father  
child  
baby  
slave  
master  
jack of all trades  
master of none

**explanation; repetition; it is what it says it is; there is no solution because there is no problem; holes; embarrassment; positions (hero); Josh Ginsburg; Barend de Wet; Clément Rosset; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; desire; lack; zigzag; wave; honesty; experiment; art as research; the logic of the supplement; failure; hysteric vs. master; crack; language (the arbitrary nature of the sign)**

Rough collection of associated ideas, problems and solutions.

It is not reasonable; give up (there is no need to agree or not).

How to be honest about offering: how to not be pretentious (how to be sincere and sincerity as embarrassing).

Observed existing system + standardized modes – what of this could be done away with, what is unnecessary.

Wanting to be an embarrassment (to make the unavoidable embarrassment of creation clear).

Fetide vs. Patricide – surviving on my own (without marks) wanting to be equal.

...No name-calling, everyone must do what they need to do (it is all fine, continental not continental, truth or lies).

Why truth – how is it possible? (coming from deconstruction, wanting a voice – wanting a voice and a body).

Writing as primary space to sabotage, then everything else; embracing intensity and small errors as direction markers (bringing the loose areas onto the level of the others in a flat space).

An ocean of calm (confusion proper hits and works) – a preferable space for creation without anxiety – what is this space, where I cannot say I am? (where I outsource my desire).

Space of death and dead language (Josh Ginsburg's 'society of 1', in my own, not even I speak the language).

Absolution of responsibility – experimentation proper (failure and success have equal merit) but the experiment has no controls.

Not an escape from language or a problem of subjective reality vs. actual reality, I do not have recourse to Artaud's intensity, its far less dramatic, yet it is still a continued and necessary escape from oneself.

On a more banal level, it is also necessarily about concessions – Deleuze fell in love with Guattari.

What is left, failures, scraps, leftovers. (Or, at times, aphorisms, live thoughts).

What not to look for (trust issues – not a naïve trust, it has nothing to do with me – trust the thing and do not rely an idea of the intention as a barometer to decide whether it's worth looking at or not) (what happens at this point, this coldness, this treatment of everything as object/concept, is it cold?).

The arbitrary nature of the sign (and the primacy of the signifier).

Refusing to enjoy (for the camaraderie).

Trauma (accidents) and the force of "life forced to think" (from Dale 2002: 87).

A step forward (as artist, embedded, swamped, having jumped in) or back (as something else, in black, having stepped away from the hole to watch).

There are many words that have been stubbornly stuck on, like Truth, with a capital T, without ever having been interrogated as to what they could mean, where they have been, and/or what they could be doing here.

I don't know about truth anymore.

Incarnation + the voice.

Losing yourself: the master and the hysteric (who speaks the truth/has the truth spoken through them/lets go and who censors/translates).

IT MUST BE AN EXPERIMENT IN ITSELF, AT THE RISK OF: IT MAY NOT BE OF ANY USE

Its not the best way to do it, or the way to do it, it's the way it has been done (step off again).

As an active, aggressive strategy against the standard pretensions (it is that too, a fight) it must also be sustainable, you must still be able to go to class. (Deleuze on having just a taste, just a drop, lingering at the edge of the crack and traversing only its surfaces). (Dale 2002: 95)

In the case of these strategies, how can one evaluate which is preferable?

Paradox of things as they are and the impossibility of expression as well as the very important discrediting of intention.

The missing thing (looking and therefore finding that there is indeed something missing, but you'll never find it, because its not there – NOTHING IS MISSING).

"Clément Rosset puts it very well: every time the emphasis is put on a lack that desire supposedly suffers from as a way of defining its object, "the world acquires as its double some other sort of world, in accordance with the following line of argument: there is an object that desire feels the lack of; hence the world does not contain each and every object that exists; there is at least one object missing, the one that desire feels the lack of; hence there exists some other place that contains the key to desire (missing in this world)".

"If desire produces, its product is real...desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object" (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 26).

(Its not that this thing presupposes nothing, but that it has found a way for it to be comfortable in such discreditable spaces).

We leave the final words to Barend de Wet:

Visitor: what are you knitting?  
de Wet: Fine Art.

*hunger art; desire*  
(Immediately right)  
note

*Hunger art*  
*drunk on water (ridiculous?)*  
*willing desire?*

*language (blanks for when words gone); language (word games)*

(Below) a misunderstood lipogram.

No mor i's or e's or o's anymr, that shuld dt, nw t stp, nc and fr nc nd ll, nvrmdnd that,  
th a's r nxt, nd thn th d's n c's n n's s' q r t v w x y z b f g h j k l m p



*oneiric house; early learning;*  
*architecture (monument)*

(Immediately above) watercolour  
and pencil on paper.

master  
philosophy  
truth

slave  
mistress  
beauty  
art

*positions (master); positions*  
*(slave); positions (mistress);*  
*philosophy; truth; beauty; art*

(Immediately above) comparable  
relations between the master,  
the slave, the mistress (hysteric),  
philosophy and art.

*Gilles Deleuze; Friedrich Nietzsche; Plato; the question as a problem; truth (the truth is always new); direction;*  
*the image of thought; positions (idiot savant); positions (pedant); reinventing the wheel; institutionalised*  
*bowel movements; truth (speaking for itself); architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb)*

(Below and following page) excerpt from Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1994: 130-139) on doubt as a blunted tool for thought and the problematic disavowal of the 'image of thought' that grounds philosophical enterprise.

"The philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of a man without presuppositions" choosing the 'idiot' over the 'pedant' whose thinking emerges "in the form of a natural capacity for thought which allows philosophy to claim to begin, and to begin without presuppositions" (Deleuze 1994: 130).

"It cannot be regarded as a fact that thinking is the natural exercise of a faculty, and that faculty is possessed of a good nature and a good will...Descartes' famous suggestion that good sense (the capacity for thought) is of all things in the world the most equally distributed rests upon no more than an old saying...What makes Descartes a philosopher is that he makes use of that saying in order to erect an image of thought as it is in principle: good nature and an affinity with the true belong in principle to thought, whatever the difficulty of translating this principle into fact or rediscovering it behind the facts. Natural good sense or common sense are thus taken to be determinations of pure thought. Sense is able to adjudicate with regard to its own universality, and to suppose itself universal and communicable in principle. In order to impose or rediscover this principle – in other words, to apply the mind so endowed – there must be an explicit method...There is no doubt, therefore, that in fact it is difficult to think, but the most difficult in fact may still be the easiest in principle. This is why the method itself is said to be easy from the point of view of the nature of thought (it is no exaggeration to say that this notion of ease poisons the whole of Cartesianism). When the presupposition of philosophy is found in an Image of thought which is claimed to hold in principle, we can no longer be content to oppose it with contrary facts. The discussion must be carried out on the level of principle itself, in order to see whether this image does not betray the very essence of thought as pure thought. To the extent that it holds in principle, this image presupposes a certain distribution of the empirical and the transcendental, and it is this distribution or transcendental model implied by the image that must be judged...There is indeed a model, in effect: that of recognition. Recognition may be defined by the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: the same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined or conceived. ... (132-3).

"...The model of recognition is necessarily included in the image of thought...this model remains sovereign and defines the orientation of the philosophical analysis of what it means to think...Such an orientation is a hindrance to philosophy. The supposed three levels – a naturally upright thought, an in principle natural common sense, and a transcendental model of recognition – can constitute only an ideal orthodoxy. Philosophy is left without means to realize its project of breaking with doxa...we may well discover a supra-temporal form or even a sub-temporal primary matter, an underground or Ur-doxa: we have not advanced a single step, but remain imprisoned by the same cave or ideas of the times which we only flatter with having 'rediscovered', by blessing them with the sign of philosophy. The form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognizable and the recognized...Moreover, while philosophy refers to a common sense as its implicit presupposition, what need has common sense of philosophy? Common sense shows every day – unfortunately – that it is capable of producing philosophy in its own way. Therein lies a costly double danger for philosophy. On the one hand, it is apparent that acts of recognition exist and occupy a large part of our daily life: this is a table, this is an apple, this the piece of wax...but who can believe that the destiny of thought is at stake in these acts, and that when we recognize, we are thinking? (134-5).

"As Nietzsche says, truth may well seem to be 'a more modest being from which no disorder and nothing extraordinary is to be feared: a self-contented and happy creature which is continually assuring all the powers that be that no one needs to be the least concerned on its account; for it is, after all, only 'pure knowledge'...What is a thought which harms no one, neither thinkers nor anyone else?" (Deleuze 1994: 135-6).



"Some reports of our perceptions do not provoke thought to reconsideration because the judgment of them by sensation seems adequate, while others always invite the intellect to reflection because the sensation yields nothing that can be trusted.

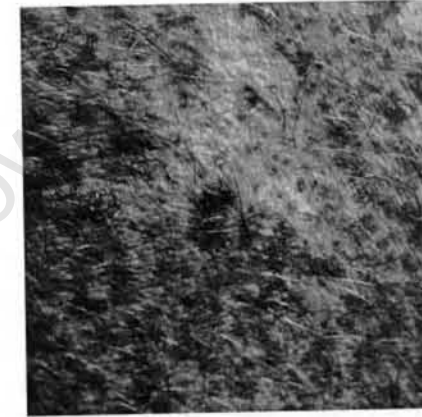
-You obviously mean distant appearances, or things drawn in perspective.

-You have quite missed my meaning..." (excerpt from a dialogue in Plato's *Republic* in Deleuze 1994:138).

"This text distinguishes two kind of things: those which do not disturb thought and (as Plato will later say) those which force us to think. The first are objects of recognition: thought and all its faculties may be fully employed therein, thought may busy itself thereby, but such employment and activity have nothing to do with thinking. Thought is thereby filled with no more than an image of itself, one in which it recognizes itself the more it recognizes things: this is a finger, this is a table...whence the question of Socrates' interlocutor: is it when we do not recognize, when we have difficulty in recognizing, that we truly think? The interlocutor seems already Cartesian. It is clear, however, that the dubitable will not allow us to escape from the point of view of recognition. Moreover, it will only give rise to a local skepticism – or, indeed, to a generalized method – on condition that thought already has the will to recognize what essentially distinguishes doubt from certitude. The same goes for dubitable as for certain things: they presuppose the good will of the thinker along with the good nature of thought, where these are understood to include an ideal form of recognition as well as a claimed affinity to the true, that *philia* which predetermines at once both the image of thought and the concept of philosophy. Certainties force us to think no more than doubts..." (Deleuze 1994: 138-9).

"All that this thinking allows is the perpetual reassurance of the same (it interrogates and razes only to reestablish that which it already knows is obviously true). – this is why we should only ever write about what we don't know...How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly? It is precisely there that we imagine having something to say. We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Only in this manner are we resolved to write. To satisfy ignorance is to put off writing until tomorrow – or rather, to make it impossible. Perhaps writing has a relation to silence altogether more threatening than that which it is supposed to entertain with death" (Deleuze 1994: xxi)

On thinking of a triangle:"all truths of that kind are hypothetical, since they presuppose all that is in question and are capable of giving birth in thought to the act of thinking. In fact, concepts only ever designate possibilities. They lack the claws of absolute necessity – in other words, of an original violence inflicted upon thought; the claws of a strangeness or enmity which alone would waken thought from its natural stupor or eternal possibility: there is only involuntary thought, aroused but constrained within thought, and all the more absolutely necessary for being born, illegitimately, of fortuitousness in the world. Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy...Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself" (1994: 139).



**Lia Perjovschi; blue dot; states of being (open); geography (outer-space); body (skin); geography (constellation); research; conditions of making (making the conditions for making); weak logic**

(Left) a blue dot tattooed onto Douglas Gimberg's arm. (The blue dot is a tribute to a statement made by Lia Perjovschi on attempting the task of mind-mapping the universe and being able to start after seeing the earth as a blue dot).



**space-time (striated); eccentric performance; positions (romantic); positions (fool); what happens when nothing happens**

(Immediately above) stills from a short karaoke-styled video filmed in Paradise, Knysna (set to Angelo Badalamenti and Ketty Lester's *Love Letters*).

**Catherine Dale; Antonin Artaud; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; Sylvere Lotringer; Baruch Spinoza; honesty; truth; truth (speaking for itself); positions (hysteric); positions (alcoholic); positions (ecstatic); intensity; body; voice (the voice that skins the body); rotten nature; eccentric performance; body (organs); body (flesh); body (brain); missing piece; zigzag; crack; surface; writing as embarrassing; desire; holes; body (genitals); positions (demiurge); positions (idiot savant); truth (the truth is always new); philosophy**

(Below and following page) excerpts from Dale (2002) on Antonin Artaud with Deleuze and Guattari.

“...Everything in the order of the written word which abandons the field of clear, orderly perception, everything which aims at reversing appearances and introduces doubt about the position of mental images and their relationship to one another, everything which provokes confusion without destroying the strength of an emergent thought, everything which disrupts the relationship between things by giving this agitated thought an even greater aspect of truth and violence – all these offer death a loophole and put us in touch with certain more acute states of mind in the throes of which death expresses itself” (Artaud in Dale 2002: 85).

Artaud’s last public reading, *The story lived by Artaud Momo*; “I put myself in your place, and I see very well that what I am saying isn’t interesting at all, it’s still theatre. What can I do to be truly sincere?” (Artaud in Dale 2002: 85).

“In a letter to André Breton, Artaud writes ‘I left because I realized that the only | language I could use on the audience was to | take bombs out of my pockets and throw them | in their faces in a gesture of unmistakable | aggression’...and yet there is this refrain, this bow, this histrionic collapse in front of nine hundred people. Artaud’s plaintive interrogation of the constitution of truthfulness is a burden to the audience and to himself (a rhetorical question, or more precisely, part of Artaud’s interrogative practice of disciplined cruelty), and more importantly a repetition, a repetition of the idea kernel of pure thought itself...truth arrives without reason but very soon becomes reasonable. What is most scandalous about Artaud’s ‘truly sincere’ however is not that Artaud synthesizes the good and the bad on this single, desperate night – as if this were – anomalous to the rest of his work, work which incessantly calls into question notions such as true and sincere – but that this determination of the true could well be his work (the true is all there is true)” (Dale 2002: 84-6).

True ≠ sincere (opposed via principle of truth as objective and sincerity as irretrievably personal).

“...injecting the audience not with the personal, but with the impotence of the personal in proposing the existence of the sincerity of truth itself. At first glance ‘truly sincere’ demonstrates the perilous probity of the integrity of a madman, poet and actor: a little sincerity is dangerous...but a lot is fatal” (86).

“...Artaud is an embarrassment to philosophy. He makes philosophy cringe when he flaunts his sincerity and truth. Even more persistently he is the philosopher who, through a restructuration of the actions and passions of the body, produces a discreditable practice of thought, and chastises both philosophy and its audience for their pre-philosophical presuppositions, their predictable emotions and physical reactions” (86).

“I have not become a poet or an actor in order to write or recite poems, but to live them. I read a poem not to milk applause but to feel the bodies of men and women – and I mean their bodies – throb and quiver in harmony with mine” (Artaud in Dale 2002: 86). In a note accompanying the above quote Dale (99) recalls Sylvere Lotringer’s comments from 1996 on Artaud’s terrible acting style, noting that while Artaud was the “butt of theatrical jokes” his “awkward gestures and his over-earnest attempts to portray a character were entertainingly far superior” adding that “in this sense Artaud is the tormentor, tormented, and fool who thrives precisely because as ridiculous as he is on stage, he is dangerously sincere and so frightens, confuses and dismays his audience” (99).

“Man is sick because he is badly constructed| we must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this| animalcule which makes him want to itch| death| god,| and with god,| his organs.| For tie me down if you want to,| but there is nothing more useless than an organ.|| When you have given him a body without organs,| then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and| restored him to his true liberty” (extract from the conclusion of Artaud’s *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* cited by Dale 2002: 99).

“I am innately genital, and if we examine closely what that means, it means that I have never made the most of myself. There are some fools who think of themselves as beings, as innately beings. I am he, who in order to be, must whip his innateness. One must be a being innately, that is, always whipping this sort of non-existent kennel [*chenil*, also hole or hovel], O bitches of impossibility!” (Artaud in Dale 2002: 88).

“I shall not command my desires and inclinations, but neither do I want them to direct me, I want to be those desires and those inclinations” (Artaud 1976: 446-7 in Dale 2002: 90).

“Artaud’s approach to ignorance is perhaps evocative of Spinoza’s. Both view ignorance or inadequate ideas as catalysts for creating active affections out of what Spinoza called joyful passions. Where Artaud cruelly confronts common forces of bodies, Spinoza who is also harsh, encourages everyone to work toward joyful relations between bodies, what he calls ‘common notions’. Both are thinking of the energy of the forces of bodies” (Dale 2002: 99).

“Above all else there is the wholeness of the nerves. A wholeness that includes all of consciousness, and the secret pathways of the mind in the flesh” (Artaud 1976: 259 in Dale 2002: 94).

“And it looks so good, I can see it| And smells so good, I can smell it| And it sounds so good, I can hear it| so why iye, iye, iye iye| can’t I touch it?” (lyrics from the Buzzcocks, *Singles going steady*, cited by Dale 2002: 99).

“In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze discusses the crack (named after F. Scott Fitzgerald’s ‘The Crack Up’) which persists at the frontier of the depths and the surface. In the twenty-second series of *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze returns repeatedly to the problem of depth and surface, of Artaud’s madness and senselessness and Carrol’s humour and nonsense, of how to stay at the surface of the crack, at the incorporeal event without actualizing oneself in the quicksand and clamour of its body” (Dale 2002: 93).

“All these questions point out the ridiculousness of the thinker: yes, they are always two aspects, and the two processes differ in nature. But when Bousquet speaks of the wound’s eternal truth, it is in the name of a personal and abominable wound which he bears within his body. When Fitzgerald or Lowry speak of this incorporeal metaphysical crack and find it in the locus as well as the obstacle of their thought, its source as well as its drying up, sense and nonsense, they speak with all the gallons of alcohol that they have drunk which have actualized the crack in the body. When Artaud speaks of the erosion of thought as something both essential and accidental, a radical impotence and nevertheless a great power, it is already from the bottom of schizophrenia. Each one risked something and went as far as possible in taking this risk; each one drew from it an irrepressible right. What is left for this abstract speaker once she has given advice with wisdom and distinction? Well then, are we to speak always about Bousquet’s wound, about Fitzgerald’s and Lowry’s alcoholism, Nietzsche and Artaud’s madness, while remaining on the shore?” (Deleuze in Dale 2002: 94).

“The humour of this conundrum encapsulates a certain ironic burden toward change, toward the perception of knowledge and the knowledge of change (and a call to loosen up if not fall apart, to live a little if not on the edge, to want a little pain, if not to die from it)...A little bit crazy, just enough to create. The question is, what does Deleuze see in Artaud’s energy – life – chaos that he so admires? The second question follows, does he limit these ‘Artaudian values’, by means of his caution? But this is to position Deleuze on a rigid line of pedantic philosophy, and Artaud on some kind of fluid line of dissolution, when the two are really not all that opposed...in their quest for being a little crazy and a little alcoholic, Deleuze and Guattari favour Henry Miller who suggests getting soused on water...like the masochist, the schizo and the drug addict [Deleuze and Guattari] are hankering for a taste, for the effects of a practice...along a crack between the flesh and its sense (at its ‘cutting edge’)” (Dale 2002: 95).

“Following Deleuze we ask, what is it that can be ordered, yet is chaotic at the same time. What is it that can only be drunken, yet is sober at the same time, and what is it that can only be crazy, yet is also sane or secure?” (Dale 2002: 96).

*voice (the meaningless voice that prevents you from being nothing and nowhere); Samuel Beckett; language (as circular); the question as a problem; language (as excess); positions (the exhausted); states of being (static); anxiety; proximity; repetition*

(Immediately below) excerpt from Samuel Beckett's *Unnamable* (1958: 307-326).

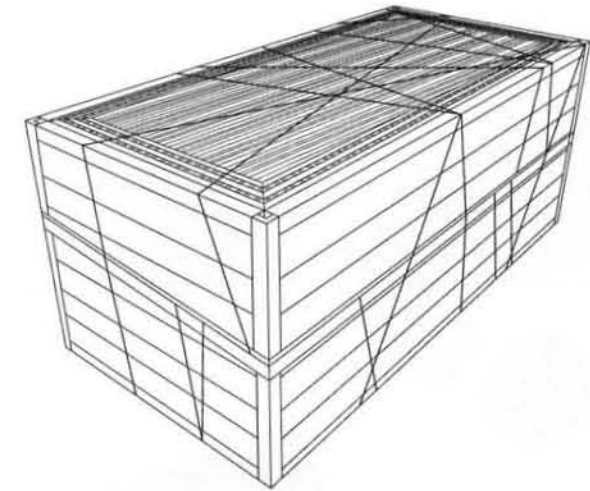
"Let us then assume nothing, neither that I can move, nor that I don't, it's safer, since the thing is unimportant, and pass on to those that are. Namely? This voice that speaks, knowing that it lies, indifferent to what it says, too old perhaps and too abased to ever succeed in saying the words that would be its last, knowing itself useless and its uselessness in vain, not listening to itself but to the silence that it breaks and whence perhaps one day will come stealing into the long clear sign of advent and farewell, is it one? I'll ask no more questions, there are no more questions, I know none anymore. It issues from me, it fills me, it clamours against my walls, it is not mine, I can't stop it, I can't prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me. It is not mine, I have none, I have no voice and must speak, that is all I know, its round that I must revolve, of that I must speak, that is all I know, with this voice that is not mine but can only be mine, since there is no one but me, or if there are others, to whom it might belong, they have never come near me..." (Beckett 1958: 307).

"But within, motionless, I can live, and utter me, for no ears but my own. They loaded me down with their trappings and stoned me through the carnival. I'll sham dead now, whom they couldn't bring to life, and my mother's carapace will rot off me. But it's entirely a matter of voices, no other metaphor is appropriate. They've blown me up with their voices, like a balloon, and even as I collapse it's them I hear. Who, them? And why nothing more from them lately? Can they have abandoned me, saying, Very well, there's nothing to be done with him, let's leave it at that, he's not dangerous. Ah but the little murmur...to murmur what it is their humanity stifles, the little gasp of the condemned to life, rotting in his dungeon garroted and racked, to gasp what it is to have to celebrate banishment, beware. No, they have nothing to fear, I am walled round with their vociferations, none will ever know what I am, none will ever hear me say it, I won't say it, I can't say it, I have no language but theirs, no, perhaps I'll say it, even with their language, for me alone, so as not to have lived in vain, and so as to go silent, if that is what confers the right to silence, and it's unlikely, it's they who have silence in their gift, they who decide, the same old gang, among themselves, no matter, to hell with silence, I'll say what I am, so as not to have not been born for nothing, I'll fix their jargon for them, the any old thing, no matter what, whatever they want, with a will, till time is done, at least with a good grace. First I'll say what I'm not, that's how they taught me to proceed, then what I am, it's already underway..." (325-326).

"Ah if only this voice could stop, this meaningless voice which prevents you from being nothing and nowhere" (370).

*oneiric house; architecture (house); early learning*

(Right) pen on paper.



*architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb); box; exine; repetition*

(Above) diagram of the box.



*architecture (exedra); box; exine*

(Immediately above) documentation of review presentation to the MFA staff group at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts. May 2010.



*reasonable and unreasonable combinations; things that are roundish*

(Left) plastic pen holster, African paduk sawdust and liquid plastic droplet.



*something to do; craft; architecture (tomb)*

(Right) polished African blackwood. Received from Douglas Gimberg.



*things that are round (spheroid); gold; food (sugar)*

(Right) sanded sugar cube and sugar cube with gold powder. Cube with gold powder assembled by Anja de Klerk.



B.B.77.3-4. (top-left)  
B.A.9. (middle-right)  
B.A.11. (bottom-right)



*hunger art; teasel; architecture (empire)*

(Left) purple-heart wood chip.



*architecture (empire); tomography; hunger art; conglomerate (wood)*

(Immediately above) chipboard off-cut.



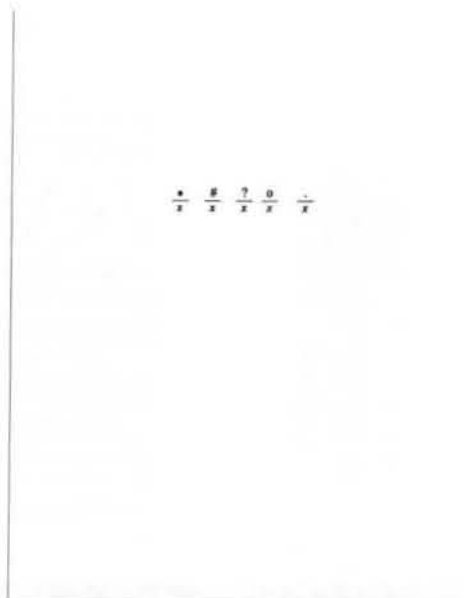
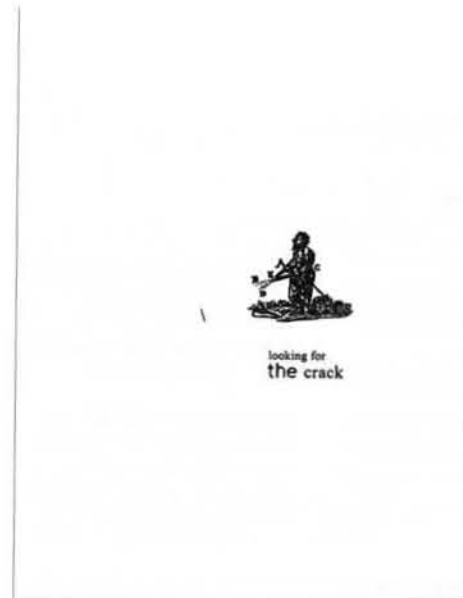
*architecture (empire); hunger art; teasel*

(Immediately above) rosewood off-cut.

(top) B.A.2.1.  
(bottom-left) B.B.80.5.  
(bottom-right) B.B.80.4.

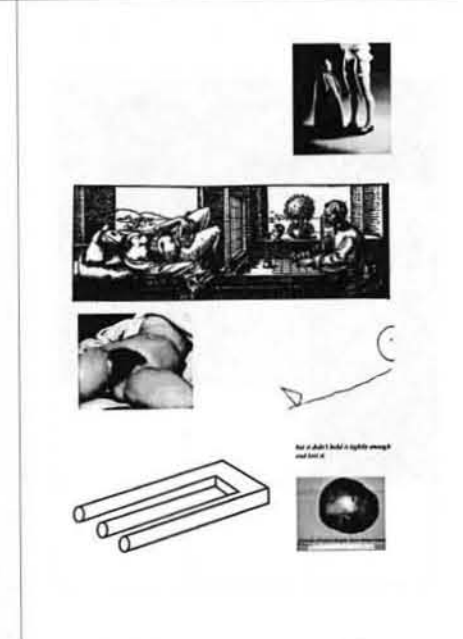
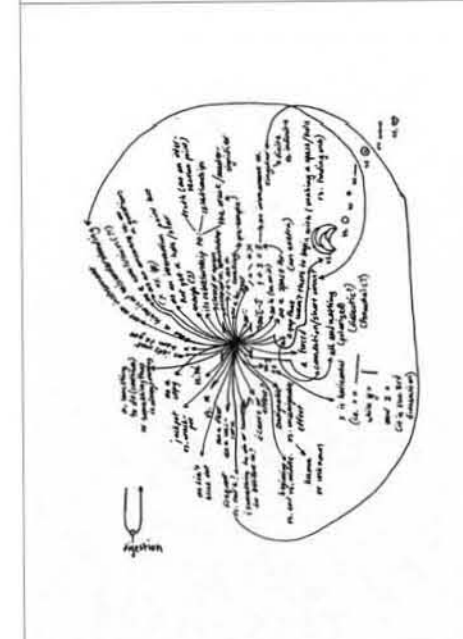
A settled (supernatant) example of how to deal with a case that was never closed because it was never opened.



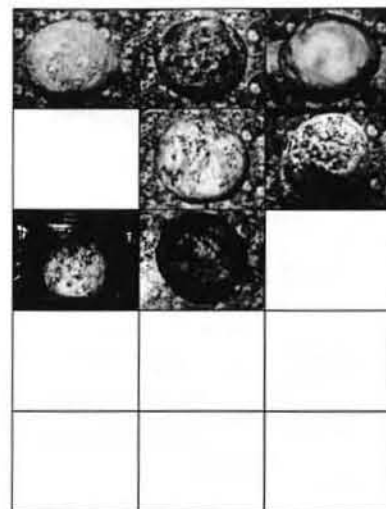
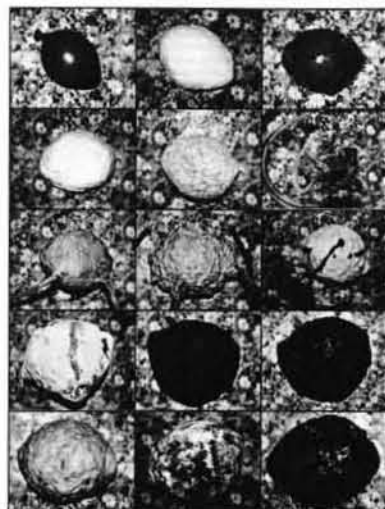


things that are roundish; food; coagitation; crack; looking for the crack (performance); adulteration; tomography; geography (strata); /+=X; elucubration; animals (dog); magic

(Above and following pages) booklet produced for *Looking for the Crack*. Additional keywords are listed below illustrated page spreads.



blivet; body (cyst); body (genitals); popular opposites; Peter Sloterdijk; slips; positions (acephalous); popular opposites



$$x + x = x$$

$$x + + = *$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \diagup + \diagdown = \times \\ & \times \diagup + \diagdown = \times \\ & (+) = \bigcirc \\ & = \times \diagup + \diagdown \\ & + + + \times \diagup + \diagdown \\ & \times + + \equiv * \diagup \\ & \diagup + + \equiv * \times \\ & \diagdown + \diagup = \bigcirc \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & x + \diagdown = x \\ & + + \diagdown = * \\ & x x x = x \end{aligned}$$

language (combinatorials)



x  
Ehugen 23/03/2019

luck; xxx; fool's gold; repetition; positions (fool)



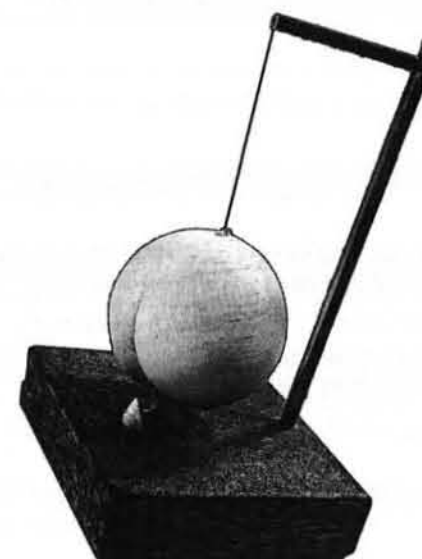
*trustees; cacolydates; novelty vs. invention; magic; conditions of making (making the conditions for making)*

Process documentation of a miniature replica of Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg's studio door, installed on a wall that separates their studio from the home of Barend de Wet, forming an unsolicited but welcome link between the two spaces (De Wet was out of town at the time of construction). (Executed as a collaboration with the Trustees.)



*fight fight fight; confusion; states of being (dynamic); positions (hysteric); process; geography (unpassable paths)*

(Immediately below) screen grabs of active windows taken during the process of piecing together *Fight fight fight, what a morning*.



FRANCIS BURGER  
*FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT, WHAT A MORNING*  
03/2010

*fight fight fight; confusion; states of being (dynamic); positions (hysteric); positions (valetudinarian); circular performance*

(Left and following pages) seminar paper presented as a part of the MFA seminar program at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts. The image on the left shows the cover page of the paper. As *Fight fight fight, what a morning* was a dry-run for the present chronology a large amount of its contents have been placed elsewhere in this document. For this and other reasons the following pages show reformatted excerpts from the paper rather than illustrations of the actual page spreads. The content is limited to February 2010. Additional information and keywords accompany the excerpts.

**fight fight fight; geography (unpassable paths); states of being (dynamic)**

(Below) excerpts from *Fight fight fight, what a morning*. The collections of text gathered and generated for *Fight fight fight* was formatted as a series of points. A selection of these is provided below. Additional keywords are provided above each point.

**exhaustion; architecture (exedra); a provisional philosophy of yes; conditions of making (making the conditions for making); reinventing the wheel; Kathryn Smith; Lia Perjovschi**

Lia Perjovschi (Romanian artist/writer/explorer/investigator/facilitator/educator) speaks about: having to invent the table and discovering that one's discoveries aren't original (you're sad or disappointed but it's good to know that you are on the right track) and the use of the space you have (body, home, studio) as a space for storing, showing and cultivating interactions.

"I try to avoid inspiration", everything is exhausted, "we exhaust even the quotations".

Subjective history (we never talk about the second or the third, only the firsts), you do what you have to do (what you do is what you have to do). (Kathryn Smith comments that if the conditions for making things aren't there, we must make the conditions). (*Dada South?* closing discussions, 28/02/2010.)

**explanation; reading and writing; language (as a surface); surface; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari**

Aim of this specifically:

Rehearsal for the system; test of ability of text to perform as a flat surface, reading the reader (can it be read, seen, picked up, taken on/in?).

Both the reader and the writer must, following Deleuze and Guattari "take some risks [them]selves, making free use of these notions" (493).

Art as an opportune space for misquoting (dabbling/dipping in) – not a free for all (a free for some?) but an open space where the wheel may be reinvented. ("The difficult thing [is] not making things, but putting oneself in conditions in which one [can] make them") (Brancusi in Dachy 2006: 89).

It is true that I have lost touch, that many of the points are enveloped in the same haze that made me think that the lady's dog painted beautifully and that makes me try and open red robots with my gate control. Short circuits?

Hungover/delirious/tired sensibility – asking the wrong questions.

A note on the objects; why they aren't souvenirs – they are the wrong thing (they are not the missing thing) and they are not substitutes.

**truth (speaking for itself); hysteric vs. master; philosophy; art; Alain Badiou**

Like the hysteric – except there is no master (I end up confronting windmills, rocks or snails): "Historically, philosophy and art are paired up like Lacan's Master and Hysteric. We know that the hysteric comes to the master and says: "Truth speaks through my mouth, I am here. You have knowledge, tell me who I am." Whatever the knowing subtlety of the master's reply, we can also anticipate that the hysteric will let him know that it's not yet it, that her here escapes the master's grasp, that it must be taken up again and worked through at length in order to please her. In so doing, the hysteric takes charge of the master, "barring" him from mastery and becoming his mistress" (Badiou 2005: 1).

**a deer exists a unicorn exists; language (as circular); language (as a surface); words with jobs**

*There is a unicorn*  
*There is a deer*  
*A unicorn exists*  
*A deer exists*

**space-time (smooth); direction; rotten nature; surface**

An attempt at making smooth space-time, in the nth dimension, where limited horizons are inframed into proterozoic, supernatant soup and teased into "tiny moving carpet[s] of turf and trampled flowers" (Beckett 2006: 366). Where every point adds an extramarital direction (there is an A and a Z, they are bound to each other and represent a contractual agreement, but there are also glyphs, particles, numbers, shapes etc.). Every object is treated and produced as a surface, as marks and as lines, "even if the people have other things to do besides read it" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 24).

**process**

Dry heave vs. slow spastic stutter vs. tantrum.

**there is no solution because there is no problem; Felix Guattari; the question as a problem**

"If you give me the answers at the same time as asking the questions, things will be much easier . . ." (Guattari in Guattari & Seem 1974: 38).

**voice; craft; stones; positions (artificer); Mladen Dolar; Georg W.F Hegel; magic; something to do; truth (speaking for itself); truth (the truth is always new)**

"... we are in Egypt, at the cradle of spiritual development, at the dawn of art. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel calls this moment the emergence of the artificer (in A. V. Miller's translation), *der Werkmeister*, a producer of incipient spiritual objects who is not yet to be an artist. Thus, in this moment, spirit "appears as an artificer, and its action, whereby it produces itself as object but without having yet grasped the thought of itself, is an instinctive operation, like the building of a honeycomb by bees". This artificer, this instinctive spirit which is not yet self-conscious spirit, is the one who produces pyramids and obelisks, like crystals of spirit with abstract geometrical lines, yet without understanding itself. The artificer produces the enigmatic figure of the Sphinx, which is enigmatic because it is an enigma to itself—the enigmas of the Egyptians, Hegel famously claimed, are enigmas for the Egyptians themselves" (Dolar 2008: 2).

**language (is not a superstructure); Jacques Lacan; truth (speaking for itself); positions (scoundrel); experiment; Georg W.F Hegel; prosopopoeia**

"Let us calmly return and spell out with the truth what it said of itself. The truth said, "I speak." In order for us to recognize this "I" on the basis of the fact that it speaks, perhaps we should not have jumped on the "I," but should have paused at the facets of the speaking. "There is no speech without language" reminds us that language is an order constituted by laws, about which we could at least learn what they exclude. For example, that language is different from natural expression and that it is not a code either..." (Lacan 2006: 344).

"*Sutor ne ultra crepidam*, just take care of your crooks. We'll even give you the scientific means with which to do so. That will help you not to think of truths you'd be better off leaving in the dark." (Lacan 2006: 28) (A statement made by a "noble Lord speaking to the Upper House in which his dignity earned him a seat") (Lacan 2006: 47) (n.17).

"If reason is as cunning as Hegel said it was, it will do its job without your help" Lacan (2006: 341) citing himself writing as a prosopopoeia of 'the Freudian thing' (truth).

**states of being (static); Samuel Beckett; tease; knife-holder**

The static state of being (in contrast to dynamic): It can be a difficult state to maintain. Its pitch is a flat but boustrophedonic line. Its movement reverberates along its arcs and dips, charged by its oblique, crab-like speed (its movement is feverish and frenetic in that every step is a step in an otherwise direction, a shuffle can be equal in speed to a leap of faith). Its movement is non-dimensional. "Nothing to show not the same. No wall towards which or from. No table back towards which or from... nothing to show not another...nothing but the strokes...the same as ever" (Beckett 2006: 488-489).

It bristles at times but often cannot move.

It is confused.

It is calm and excitable and its sustenance is subject to its fluctuating ability to project its own comfort (it is stubborn and over-confident; it is confident in the things it has found). It is exteroceptive, it looks out, and interoceptive, it traverses surfaces, it dwells on skin and follicles, travels along the internal surfaces of orifices. It sees and it listens, it finds things and it envelopes itself around them. It is open, but not fragile. Tensile but not anxious.

It is also, at times, exhausted (but not tired) it can sit and stare, its "hands sitting on the table and head sitting on hands, head level with the table...lift past head a moment to see his past hands" (Beckett in Deleuze 1995: 5-6).

It speaks less but it is comfortable with words, it sees them as surfaces and it skims over them.

It does not feign interest. It walks alone, in the clouds, on water, with a chest that swells after encountering an unremarkable anomaly and continues to swell even after it is quietly informed that the thing it has found has a name and it is called a 'knife-holder'.

**process; desire; lack**

Desire as lack appears at first as a revelation (it's a curse) in its blatant discomfort with the unknown (what is lacking is not what is unknowable but what is not there).

**hunger art; animals (dog)**

"We know that our dogs go through the motions of smelling, seeking, chasing, biting and shaking to death with equal enthusiasm whether they are hungry or not." (Lorenz in Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 317)

**flow; science;  
monstration;  
Anja de Klerk**



**trustees; miscommunication;  
accident**



*'Bad Lines'*

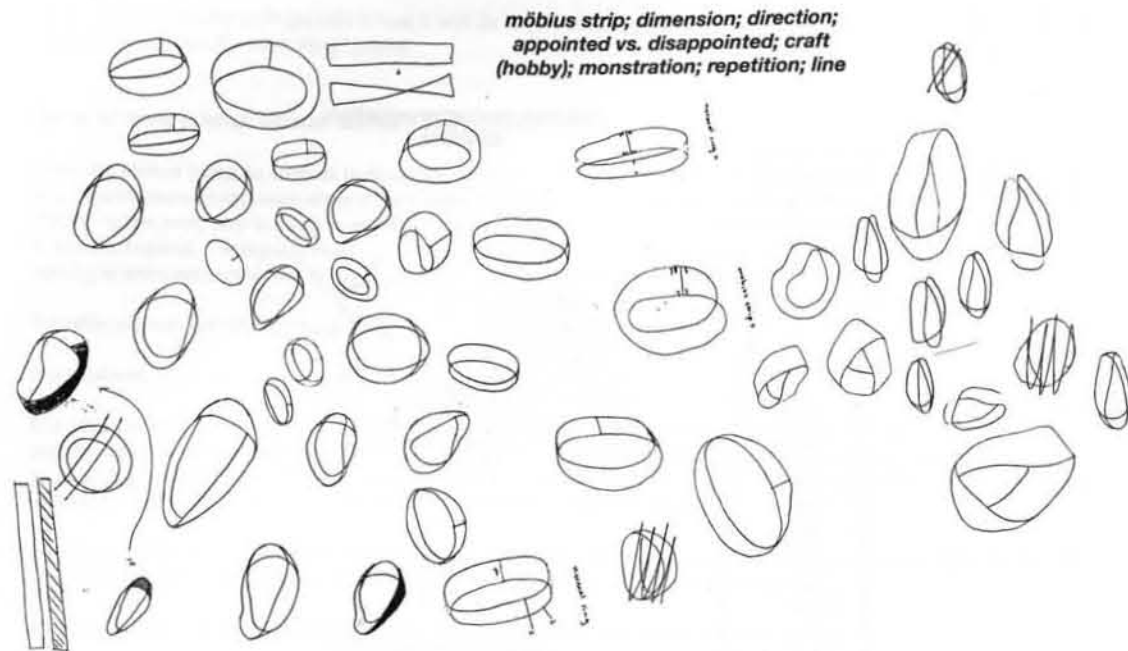
**diversion; monstration**



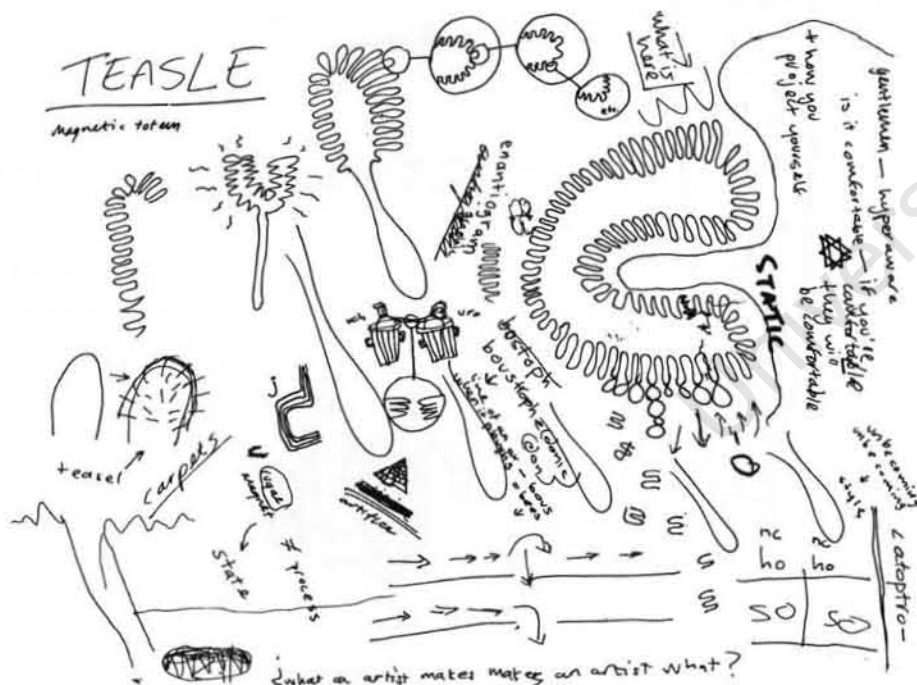
**body (eyes); direction;  
intersection points**



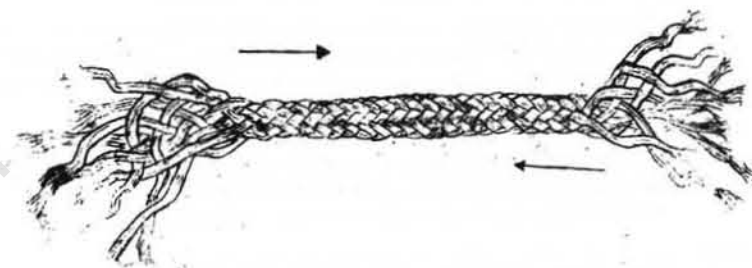




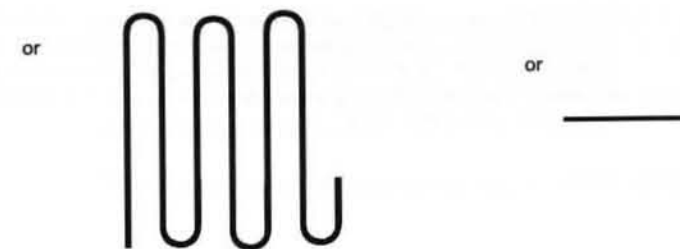
teasel; knife-holder; line; states of being (static)



unbecoming; prophesy; accident



teasel; knife-holder; line; states of being (static); repetition



**fight fight fight; geography (unpassable paths); states of being (dynamic); geography (constellation); pricks**

(Below and following pages) further excerpts from *Fight fight fight, what a morning*. The following excerpts have been taken from the index (which was more of a glossary) that accompanied the body text of the seminar paper. Again, owing to the large amount of repetition of content placed elsewhere in this document the index has been heavily cut. Keywords are listed on the left.

<b>art as a diversion</b>	"As Darian Leader proposes, the artistic image is there to capture a look; it's not necessarily about representing well than it is about fooling the viewer... 'what is painted [sic] is there to attract the other, but more importantly, to attract the other away from the artist'" (Smith 2009: 4).
<b>circular performance</b>	The process is characterized by its perpetual and unchangeable movement (it mimics going forward and cannot change direction without moving backwards). Hyperceptive (generally interoceptive, related to dynamic state of being).
<b>dada</b>	"A provisional philosophy of yes" (Sloterdijk 1987: 395).
<b>discription</b>	Things that have been irrevocably plucked from the whole. (Ronan Coyle)
<b>enough</b>	"His feet grew more and more flat and splay. His horizon was the ground they trod. Tiny moving carpet of turf and trampled flowers [...] He was not given to talk. An average of a hundred words per day and night. Spaced out. A bare million in all. Numerous repeats. Ejaculations. Too few for even a cursory survey. What do I know of man's destiny? I could tell you more about radishes. For them he has a fondness. If I saw one I would name it without hesitation. [...] We lived on flowers. So much for sustenance. He halted and without having to stoop caught up a handful of petals. Then moved munching on. They had on the whole a calming action. This notion of calm comes from him. Without him I would not have had it. Now I'll wipe out everything but the flowers. No more rain. No more mounds. Nothing but the two of us dragging through the flowers. Enough my old breasts feel his old hand" (Beckett 2006: 366-70).
<b>architecture (exedra)</b>	Social space; space-holder for the third. A fertile space for relations within a research community (which also simultaneously acknowledges and sustains such relations and the responsibility that such a space demands).  "There is nothing that I won't do for you, there is nothing that you won't do for me. So, we end up doing nothing for each other" (Boshoff 2010).
<b>fight fight fight</b>	"...his last words were 'Fight fight fight' and 'what a morning'. All the little things come back – <i>mémoire de l'escalier</i> " (letter from Beckett to Thomas McGreevy 2/7/33 on the death of his father). ' <i>Mémoire</i> ' is a substitute for ' <i>esprit</i> ' in the expression, ' <i>esprit de l'escalier</i> ' "an inspired afterthought that comes to only only after leaving, on the stairs" (Fehsenfeld & Overbeck 2009).

**formless**

In Bataille's "lapidary Dictionary entry devoted to the word formless" he announces that "words should have jobs, rather than definitions". "The job of the formless is to "*déclasser*", an action that simultaneously (1) lowers or debases objects by stripping them of their pretensions – in the case of words their pretensions to meaning – and (2) declassifies, or attacks the very condition on which meaning depends, namely the structural opposition between definite terms" (Krauss 1999: 5).

**fort-da**

"A small boy throws a wooden reel and retrieves it by means of a string attached to it, announcing 'Oo' on its disappearance and 'Ah' on its retrieval. Freud interprets the sounds as fort ('gone') and da ('there')" (Macey 2000: 133).

**body (genitals)**

Things that you stick your nose into.

**intensity**

"It's a very delicate business, these intensities: the finest intensity becomes harmful if it overtaxes your strength at a given moment; you have to be able to take it in, you have to be in shape" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 198).

**merzbau**

Kurt Schwitters's began working on his first *Merzbau* in 1923, transforming his family home into an immersive and collaborative installation. Destroyed in 1943 by the Allied bombardments, records of the interior describe columns piercing through floors, with cavities and grottoes containing a "bordello with a three legged-lady" designed with Hannah Höch and another with the "sorely mutilated body of a pitiful young girl tainted with tomatoes and many Christmas gifts" (Witovsky 2005: 452).

**space-time (smooth);  
space-time (striated)**

"Pierre Boulez was the first to develop a set of oppositions and complex differences, as well as reciprocal non-symmetrical correlations, between smooth and striated space...in simplest terms Boulez says that in a smooth space-time one occupies without counting, whereas in a striated space-time one counts in order to occupy" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 477).

**states of being (dynamic)**

A state or mode of practice that is preoccupied by its own eccentric speed and its performance in relation to established sources of power (only ever bouncing off things as a result).

**states of being  
(exteroceptive)**

Mode that is hyperceptive to sensations produced by external stimuli.

**states of being  
(hyperceptive)**

Definitely full, definitely empty.

"If you are closed it will never happen...you have to escape from your prison...the secret is to be able to see...learn to be full of expectation" (Willem Boshoff at the *Dada South?* symposium, February 2010).

The coincidence of being open, unhinged, confused, hypersensitive and/or exhausted or desperate. Variation on hypersensitive to emphasize its shape (it is round not sharp).

A state of being that fluctuates between a predominantly static modality and a predominantly dynamic modality.

**states of being  
(interoceptive)**

Mode that is hyperceptive to sensations produced by internal stimuli.

- states of being (static)** Use of the term 'static' functions in opposition to dynamic.
- Tensile state of being. A mode of practice, a state, or a structure, that functions as a flexible point of gravity (magnetic and stationary) that also functions as a teasel. The state is characterized by a slow or almost stationary speed
- teasel** Device (modeled on the dried head of the spiny teasel plant) used to raise a nap (raised hairs or threads) on the surface of fabric (SACOD 2002: Sv. 'teasel'). (Predominantly used for making carpets.)
- the only way out is through** Quote from Josh Ginsburg, 2009, attributed to Hellen Keller.
- unit** A form to repeat (craft repeatedly). ("The divine objects are hidden between us"). A totem, not a souvenir (a task for the artificer).
- Something to do rather than something to believe in. A central, interoceptive middle space ("...it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organize a limited space") (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 311).
- The unit is less a space than a spacer, a placeholder, an outline that designates an empty inside and a too full outside or vice versa (a preventative measure). The inside swells to fit its borders, but nothing seeps out, it is watertight and airtight and an excellent place to drown in. Occupied. Left empty but still claustrophobic (bristling).
- A grotto (Schwitters and the *Merzbau*) without marks, nondescript but entirely obvious and recognizable.



**accident; body (hair); things that are round (spheroid); love; space-time (smooth)**

(Left) beard hair from Douglas Gimberg. Received from Barend de Wet.



**things that pick you up; knots**

Metal wire. Received from Christian Nerf.

(top-left) B.B.80.2.  
(bottom-right) B.A.12.

*craft (hobby)*

(Right) wool. Received  
from Barend de Wet.



*fecundity; things that are  
round (spheroid)*

(Left) seed heads.

B.B.97. (top)  
B.B.101. (bottom)

*geography (relief); emollient;  
things that are round (spheroid)*

(Left) degraded piece of wood.



*rotten nature; food; superstition;  
truth; elucubration; magic;  
adulteration*

(Right) apple with a tunnel gnawed  
through it by resident cockroaches  
and fruit flies in Michaelis studio  
over a series of nights.

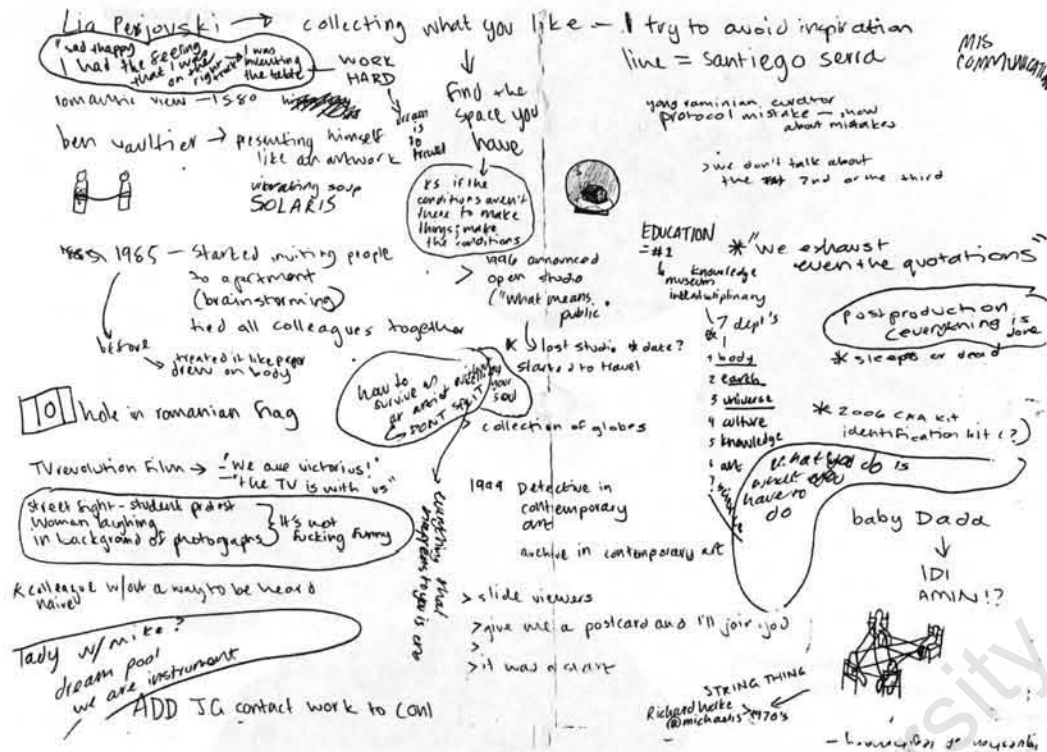


(top) B.A.58.  
(bottom) B.B.94.2.



**Lia Perjovschi; Dan Perjovschi; art history (subjective); history; Dada South?; conditions of making (making the conditions for making); architecture (exedra)**

(Below) notes from Lia Perjovschi's presentation on the Contemporary Arts Archive, subjective art-history, timelines, mind-maps and the CAA (Contemporary Arts Archive, Romania, co-founded with her partner Dan Perjovschi). Dada South? closing lectures, 23 February 2010 at the IZIKO South African National Gallery.



geography (constellation); aerial view; process; box

(Left) process documentation of object layouts.

**Dada South?; dry-run number one (performance); trustees; public performance; coagitation; art as a swamp; positions (scoundrel); positions (institutionalised prisoner); positions (artist); positions (hero); cacolydates; dada; Francis Picabia; Tristan Tzara; space-time (smooth); space-time (striated); desire; lack; zigzag; wave; Thembinkosi Goniwe; Kendell Geers; Tom Morton; Gilles Deleuze; Samuel Beckett; Frederic Jameson; Jean-Francois Lyotard; Kemang Wa Leheurele; masters vs. daddies; postmodernism; fight fight fight; relache; hysteric vs. master; something to do; long live Francis the failure**

(Below and following pages) own script for *Dry-Run Number One* (Trustees with Jacques Coetzer as the executioner and Niklas Zimmer on drums, 2010), collaborative performance by the Trustees (Francis Burger, Christian Nerf, Douglas Gimberg and Barend de Wet) at the *Dada South?* symposium (February 2010).

**DRY RUN NUMBER ONE**

**Francis Picabia: Tableau rastadada 1920**

**vive papa francis le raté**  
**Long live francis the failure**

As a profoundly self-effacing, illogical and contradictory movement, Dada's attempt to finish off the suffocation of art ended up resuscitating it (spongy power of art etc.)

**mr picabia breaks with the dadas, 1921 comedia**

I applaud all ideas, but nothing else, only the ideas interest me and not what gravitates around them, profiting from ideas disgusts me. "One has to live," you tell me? You know as well as I that our existence is short compared to the profit one can gain from an invention, we're on the earth since the day before yesterday and we'll die tomorrow.

People class individuals into two categories: "unserious" and "serious." No one until now has been able to explain to me what a serious man is. I will make the attempt here myself. I think that you call a man serious when he is able to provide for his neighbors, his family, his friends, on condition that to these ends he put the interest on his capital to work. An unserious man is one who confuses interest with capital, and doesn't seek to make dollars with his ideas - from an artistic viewpoint, a copyist at the Louvre will always be more serious than I am! Dada, you see, was not serious, and that is why it won over the world like wildfire. If some people take it seriously now, that's because it's dead! Many people will call me a killer, but they're deaf and shortsighted. Anyway, there are no killers; are tuberculosis and typhoid killers? Are we in control of our lives? In my opinion, there is only one killer, the one who created the world. But, since no one created the world, there are no killers, Dada will live forever! And thanks to that, art dealers will make their fortune, publishers will treat themselves to cars, writers will get the Legion of Honor, and I... will stay Francis Picabia!

All that is a lot easier than the faith of a copper-smith, who always laughs at what's funny and finds black dark and white light. The copper-smith warms up in the sun because he's cold; don't be cold, and you'll see how much the sun looks like rain!

Existence is tolerable really only on condition that one lives among people who have no ulterior motives, no opportunists, but that would be asking the impossible... Talent doesn't exist, masterpieces are just documents, truth is the pivot on the scale. Everything is boring, no? Falling leaves are boring, new leaves are boring, heat is boring, cold is boring. Grandfather clocks that don't chime are boring, those that do chime are boring. Having a telephone is boring.

not having a telephone is boring. People who die are boring just as are those who don't! Look how badly the world is put together, why doesn't our brain have the force of our desires? But all that matters is that we have a taste of the masterpiece- fossils. A man is called a masterpiece because he shares the taste of others, for you, life is a guitar on which one picks only the same tune forever.

146  
Tzara quote from pg 4  
Daddy you share me Daddy, please share me  
Picabia, "Papa-Et-Not-Papa", *Literature* 12 (February 1920), p. 2

To get to something more recent, there was some discussion yesterday letting the in dictate the out and the without, about suspending the reference, withholding the name until we have to name it, eventually, when we hope that it will have emerged somehow out of the fray, but also when we will no longer have time to deliberate. What struck me with this point, specifically Thibodeaux's, about finding our names first, before we use theirs to explain us to ourselves, I thought it strange that dada was being seen as a base rather than a collision point in a nodal network of master-signifiers. But why do we want one of these anymore in any case, we don't want chalk doors and we don't want to fight for little victories. Kendall Geers' theory of the artist as a trickster or the jester as an empowering position seems to take a similar place here, and as much as I respect that position (one which Tom Morton has explained by comparing artists to institutionalized prisoners, that don't want freedom but a bigger cell and a better tobacco allowance) as much as I understand that position as a space where we can dwell and believe in art, there really is a need to fight. To really fight, against these little victories.

It is not enough for us to simply suspend the signifier - we must break out entirely from that anxious system of thinking where escape seems like the only option. We can't escape the names or the lack of them if we forget about the master signifier and find alternative modalities of surviving language and the rest without. We need to suspend the idea of space-time. The first step is to take note of how the idea of desire as lack is, like Deluze says, a malediction of desire.

- The three maledictions are:
1. You will lack every time you desire;
  2. You will only hope for discharges;
  3. You will only pursue the impossible jouissance.

Desire is thus completely ensnared, it is taken up in a circle.

The first malediction of desire, the first malediction that weighs on desire like a Christian curse, and goes back to the Greeks, is that desire is lack. The second malediction is: desire will be satisfied by pleasure, or will be in an enunciable relation

where it is impossible to say I am.

But there is more at stake here, in that what art provides is not something to believe in, but something to do.

C: That's what Roché said. Your best work has been the use of your time.  
D: That's right, I think that's really right.  
(Cabanne 1971, 72) → SMOOTH + STRIATED in space time

As a continuum, rather than a zigzag (DIAGRAM), the struggle is not subject to the neurotic and painful boring holes that we drive around the stakes of our various performativities, looping back on anything we put out and hoping more and more desperately that something will crack even it is us ourselves.

We break away from the centric lantern of reactive performance, the lantern of dada, of Nina Romm, of dialectical thinking, / PICABIA QUOTE from pg 2  
If it were married to logic, art would be living in incest, engulfing, swallowing its own tail.... -Tristan Tzara, Dada Manifesto 1918

We also relying on our daddies and our masters, we are no longer the hysteric, that Alain Badiou borrows from Lacan (where the hysteric entraps the master by presenting him with her unsolvable dilemma, an unmasterable complex that denies him his mastery) but something else, a "nomad", traveling through ideas as one travels through countries and cities, eating parakeets and hummingbirds, swallowing live marionettes, sucking the blood of graffiti, feeding on the feet of painters' or rather something far less impressive, someone who thinks too hard who understands the importance of their hands, or someone like me, who about everything and nothing at the same time, someone like me, who understands that the divine objects are hidden between us and that the weak points are hidden in the water (because we know that the river has long since run dry and we wouldn't run for just anyone).

There is the other thing, wrapped up in this, but because it's already done I want to say other things instead, because we have put genitals on the table and it would be a pity to leave them there without feeling them up.

#### RESISTANCE FIRST

Although this having missed the opportunity to speak about what I wanted to because it's already done is also a key point, one that was missed yesterday in the reluctant dabbles over the postmodern, which I don't say discreetly because it's not an embarrassing word. The point is Lyotard's who speaks of his very cute, in Kennard's words, invention of the post modern - a concept that must be understood according to the paradox of the future anterior - a process whereby the event of the work or the text will always come too late for its author, and their realization of it always comes too soon. It is on this point as well, that

with *jouissance*. Of course, there will be those who will tell us that these are not the same thing. Nonetheless, there is a peculiar circuit here: desire-pleasure-*jouissance*. And all that, once again, is a way of cursing and liquidating desire. The idea of pleasure is a completely rotten (*pourrie*) idea. One only has to look at Freud's texts, at the level of desire-pleasure, which amount to saying that desire is above all a disagreeable tension. There are one or two texts where Freud says that, after all, perhaps there are agreeable tensions, but again that doesn't take us very far. Broadly speaking, desire is lived as such a disagreeable tension that - a horrible, hideous word is required here, that's how bad this thing is - a discharge is necessary. And this discharge, this is what pleasure is! People will have peace and then, alas! desire is reborn, a new discharge will be necessary. The types of conceptions that are called, in scholarly terms, hedonistic, namely, the search for pleasure, and the types of mystical conceptions that come desire by virtue of what is fundamental in lack - I would simply like you to sense that, in any case, they both consider desire to be a dirty little thing that wakes us up, and that wakes us up in the most disagreeable manner: either by putting us in relation with a fundamental lack, which can then be assuaged by a kind of activity of discharge, and then one will have peace, and then it will all begin over again.

#### Dualism, Monism and Multiplicities (Desire-Pleasure-Jouissance) 1973

I'm thinking of this book on sexual life in ancient China - what's different is the way desire is experienced in a totally different manner: it's not related to any transcendence, it's not related to any lack, it's not measured by any pleasure, and it's not transcended by any *jouissance*, under the form or myth of the impossible. Desire is posited as a pure process. Concretely, this means that it is not at all the organs, their problem is not at all the Western problem, which is: How to extract sexuality from genitality. Their problem is: How to extract sexuality from the orgasm? Then, broadly speaking, they say: You understand, pleasure or orgasm, that's not the achievement of the process, it is either its interruption or its exasperation, or the two amount to the same thing, and it's completely deplorable! No doubt, that has to happen, but then one has to perceive these moments of suspension as veritable suspensions that allow the process to once again be set in motion.

This is why the books we've given out say 'go home and play with your genitals', it's not a reactionary phrase, we mean it sincerely, and it's one of the reasons why Barred de Wet is free and why he is really an artist who understands the process of immersing yourself in a wildered pore on the nose of a brandy drinker or a body that has been only slightly ravaged by grief. Go home and play with your genitals. This problem of desire as lack settles itself comfortably within artistic practice. There are two ways to follow from this, the more obvious connection would be to draw a parallel between the discharge of an organ and the object of art as an excretion, in its finality, it leaves us wanting. As a continuous process, a process that we share and hide between with our *cacodylates*, an organ that occupies us indefinitely and what we produce would be more like a kidney stone, a stone that speaks and that will survive us and the circular anxiety of our optimistic ideas of individual ego, the truth, etc. A by-product that forms within a body without its knowledge, objects that form themselves and that supersede their host (things that are what they are and that can survive on their own). It speaks in a place

we can effectively take the postmodern, as a centric performance, to task, with Frederic Jameson's last words, the prophetic valorization of the new (which falls in the same bag as the particularly south African or the uniquely recently unsuspended representative name of the new south African art modality) becomes misleading in that it presents us with a failed solution, a safe space in a terrible system of anxious circling. Jameson cites Deleuze and Guattari's warning one, but a way of surviving under capitalism, producing fresh desires within the structural limits of the capitalist mode of production as such: a way of learning from Las Vegas and making ourselves at home with our alienation, precisely because the 'dynamic of perpetual change is not some alien rhythm within capital a rhythm specific to those non-instrumental activities that are art and science - but rather is the very 'permanent revolution' of capitalist production itself, at which point the exhilaration with such revolutionary dynamism is a feature of the bonus of pleasure and the reward of the social reproduction of the system itself.

Those are the last words.

To get back to genitals, and I can because I must, or I must because I can, or I must can I because, or because must I can, I'd like to get closer towards what Priet Soterioli (quoted by Klaus Beekman in the Dada culture anthology) terms a physiognomic philosophy -

one more thing about genitals, and I can because I must. I want to talk about how it would feel to fuck in a field of flowers, knees and elbows bare compressed and ground into damp soil and weedy stalks, bent face down towards thousands of tiny open holes, mounds, receivers - intent for all purposes on a different kind of penetration.

READ BECKETT  
I GAVE UP BEFORE BIRTH (Samuel Beckett)

(Ahrar's image of Michael K is perfectly of a boom boom swamp in "bowed head resting on hands", 14 hands sitting on the table and head sitting on hands, head level with the table. The posture of the exhausted "Head sunk on crippled hands." "One night as he sat at his table, head on hands. Lift his past head a moment to see his past hands ... skull alone in a dark place bent bowed on a board ... "hands and head a little heap" 15. [For crawling in Molloy in Molloy, for rolling, Macman in Malone Dies, for one planted in a jar, Mahood in The Unnamable] 16. Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, in *Nohow On 103*, Slingshot Sull, in *As the Story Was Told*, (113, 116). For to End Yet Again, CSP (179), *Atar a Bird*, ibid., (195).

Blanks for when words gone, (worstward ho)  
THOUGHTS ON THE STAIRS

Be sensible and avoid any emotion or agitation

What we wanted was to make a clean sweep of existing values, but also, in fact, to replace them with the highest of human values in the *Beinner Tagesblatt*. Bader stuck out: "The assertion by the press that this is a matter of mental illness seems to me to be one of the methods used today when a man becomes embarrassing."

DADA - this is a word that throws up ideas so that they can be shot down; every bourgeois is a little playwright, who invents different subjects and who, instead of situating suitable characters on the level of his own intelligence, like chrysalises on chairs, tries to find causes or objects (according to whichever psychoanalytic method he practices) to give weight to his plot, a talking and self-defining story.<sup>2</sup>

(Tzara 1919 manifesto)

Tristan Tzara  
A Note On Negro Poetry (1918)

"I don't even want to know that there were men before me" (Descartes), but some essential & simple laws, pathetic & muffled fermentation of a solid earth

"Madly beautiful," that is, drawn from the last dangerous depths. But why is it that I am no longer inspired by such a phrase but irritated by it? Will the one who clasped with things be the one to harmonise them? That is probably what is making me sad."

There is a unicorn

There is a deer

A unicorn exists

A deer exists

"pops and whistles that have a hollow ring and say nothing of the exhaustion - too fervent, too excitable, too strong (what I would really prefer is to sit for a day and play with my genitals)"

[Go home now and play with your genitals]

Barend de Wet as the workmaster, the artificer or 'producer of incipient spiritual objects'

Please don't speak to me about heart attacks.

Smooth + striated space-time

Craft, good craftsmanship, games, canned chance

[Dada as profoundly self-effacing, at its best, ended up resuscitating endless circles of desperate and anxious performance - there is no need to perform, forget about the neurosis + the desire for pathetic eccentric over-performance, its done, success is not around the corner, its over]

RELACHE!

The performance has been cancelled!

(Ball 1926, 77)  
I believe that we must, in this sense, reverse the idea of the Eternal Return. Our anguish derives, not from the promise of infinite repetition, but from the following: the moments grasped within the in-maintenance or return suddenly appear as ends. Remember that in all systems those instants are considered and assigned as means; morality always says: "let every instant of your life be motivated." The Return de-motivates the instant, frees life from purpose and is thereby, first of all, its downfall. The Return is the whole man's dramatic mode and his mask; it is the desert of a man whose every instant is henceforth unmotivated. (Bataille

speech

silence /

\ laughter/screams  
(allen weiss)

his last words were "Fight fight fight" and "what a morning" All the little things come back - *mémoire de l'escalier* (letter from Beckett to Thomas McGreevy 2/7/53) [*mémoire* is substitute for "esprit" in the expression, "esprit de l'escalier" an inspired afterthought that comes to only after leaving, on the stairs] in Fehsenfeld, M.D. & Overbeck, L.M. (eds.), 2009. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: Volume I: 1929-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peter Sloterdijk has described Dada's strategy as "a provisional philosophy of 'Yes'"

Sloterdijk, Peter

1987 *Critique of Cynical Reason* (tr. Michael Eldred). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

It is... only owing to the solution of language (and of the institutional order of things) that are perceived as it which conceives that cannot effect, by a "subject" (that) the popular mind separates lighting from its dark and takes the light for an action, for the operation of a subject called lightning... as if there were a light that would be the subject of the action, and not the light itself, there is no "thing" behind doing, reflecting, becoming... the light is everything (Nietzsche 1967, 45) (from Beckmann)

Dada South?; go home and play with your genitals/all and nothing; trustees; propaganda; holes; dry-run number one (performance); body (genitals); process; something to do; coagitation; positions (cowboy)

(Below and following pages) booklet produced by the Trustees (Francis Burger, Christian Nerf, Douglas Gimberg and Barend de Wet) as an audience hand-out to accompany *Dry-Run Number One* (performance at the Dada South? Symposium, February 2010). (The booklet is a reproduction of the proposal submitted to the organisers of the symposium which had the form of a notebook). Additional keywords are provided below illustrated page spreads.

# GO HOME AND PLAY WITH YOUR GENITALS

The Trustees  
Dry Run Number One

DADA SOUTH? SYMPOSIUM 18-19 February 2010 DDEO S.A.N.C.

ONHILON ONY TTV

1926, 6, 1926, 10, 1926, 11.



What strange things one encounters here.



The desecrated as the experimental type.

He has nothing to make allowances for, nothing to risk. He has his whole person at his disposal.

He can be his own guinea pig and must be to his own satisfaction. Nobody can prevent him. Hugo Ball, 13 August 1918 (Ball 1986: 79)

Ball, Hugo. 1986. *Hugo Ball of Dada*, edited by John Burt Foster, Jr. California: University of California Press.

088-260 4669

THE KEY TO CHANGE IS GIVING UP,  
RELINQUISH, QUIT, END.

When all you have's a hammer  
All you see is nails  
When all you have's a hammer  
And when all else fails  
Hit the nails!

DESPERATE  
DESPERADO

### DRY RUN

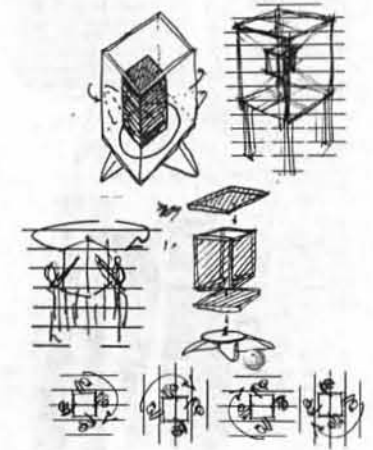
The proposed presentation will feature a combination of spoken or dictated words, images and props, projected images, physical illustrations, writing and experimental sound production.

Performing written responses to others' sugar notes and accompanied by Niklas Fennert's experimental dictating, each member of the group will meet as independently prepared and dictated thirty minute performances. The individual performances will run simultaneously, cross-reference and focus points will change continuously. In addition to chance interactions, a series of prearranged signals in some devices like a pen, a whistling sound or a one minute coded note from Fennert will trigger collective action. Each of these signals will be attached to the document. Invited third-party participants.

While discussing language, gestures and our knowledge of each others' respective practices have given us a general idea of what each member has planned. (I should say that while play with his props while I translate projects presents, Fennert made a paper and Douglas team up the stage with his handmade electric guitar) the actual presentation will be our first full

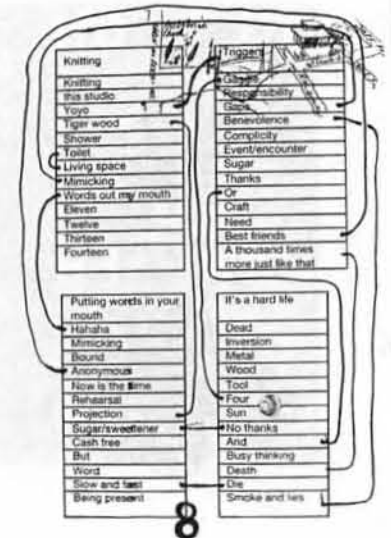


intentional. This is in keeping with our current policy on public relations and our commitment with open for both pleasure and unpleasant surprises



SOME THINGS STAY THE CHANGE

the telephone is always  
BdW: ...we need a response of seven words from  
Dg: saw a truck full of sugar bags  
Fp.e. Spade says his rate will be R4.00 per word.  
Ck: I'm buying cigarettes, do you want some?  
use it that way.



surrender; positions (shepherd)

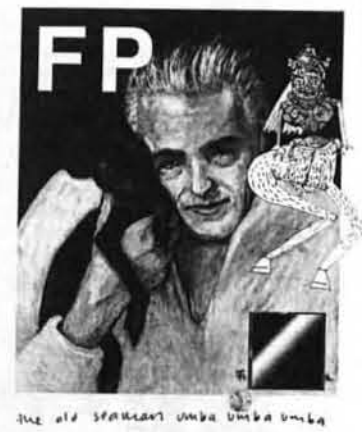
miscommunication; language (combinatorials); hidden noise



the  
"six legged table" principle

1992-12th JUNE → 2001 15th DECEMBER

keepers of truth  
destruction

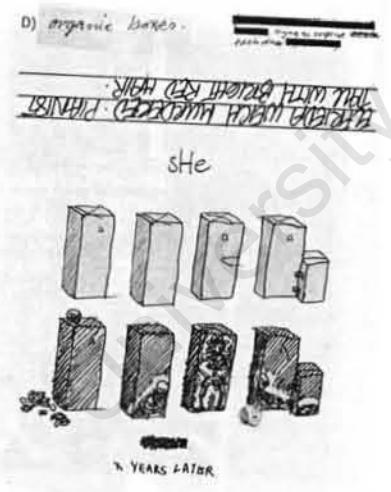


10



11

Francis Picabia; prophesy; six legged table



12

56



Bujale 13

"I don't think that  
there is the slightest  
to give a character  
discrepancy from what we  
have invented a character  
when one finds more  
consistent to let life  
on stage than to analyze  
it in a work."

THANK, theatre questions  
(in Shakespeare, Marlowe Taylor 1965: 92)

CRACK POT

"THE IDEALS BEHIND TO THESE  
WHO HAVE JUST EATEN THEIR  
FILL." (Canto 100 in Tenny 83)

"if you are absolutely determined  
to give the point an ending  
of something you can't explain  
it... perfection" (10)

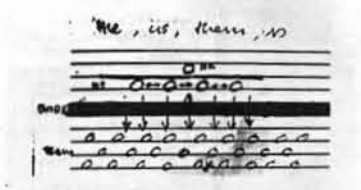
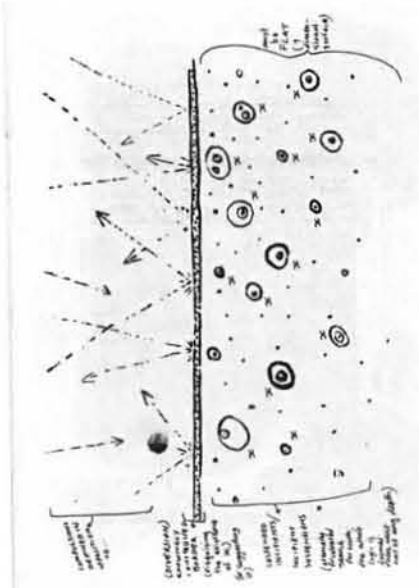
Disentangling/laying  
#Hence/theatrics

"a the actual piece  
ought to be written  
performed, rehearsed,  
rehearsed with musical  
discrepancy, played  
and played by a single  
individual. This is what  
I think is the end."

weak points  
are hidden  
in the water

13

Bujale 13



responsibility

satán; positions (blind); trust; universal athlete; surface; who they?; Alfred Jarry; positions (artificer)

57

DD-218 - discharge papers  
 Dave Romy - in the line of fire / in front of the house  
 Dead horse - to show someone they are not on the side  
 pay cycle & distribution in the field of  
 the government's territories  
 field experience - ability to interpret and on  
 long term - the team used for the "use on direction"  
 used by Soviet military leaders  
 MTP - when justice is present in the  
 pay 2 - service work, page of where performance  
 was - "warrior" one, page of where performance  
 was - "taking part" inside election during camp  
 for others  
 500 - substantial dance artist given  
 leaders - they are also around now  
 some for military or "gully" computer report

16



16



ART MAY BE MAKING  
 SOMETHING OUT OF  
 NOTHING BUT THE  
 BRICK LIES IN THE  
 MAKING SOMETHING  
 OUT OF SOMETHING.

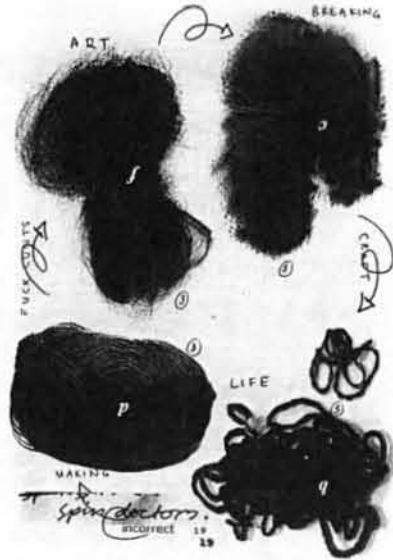
17



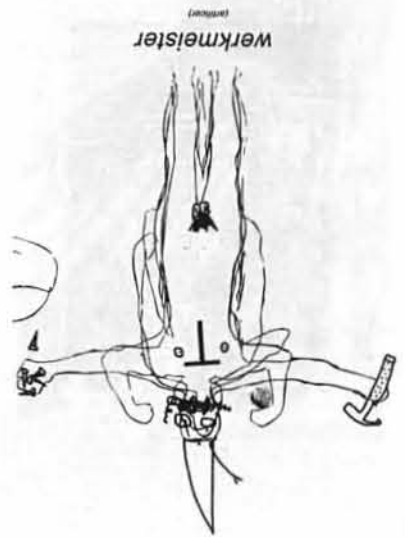
Hunger artists  
 Mr I waited  
 but not do not

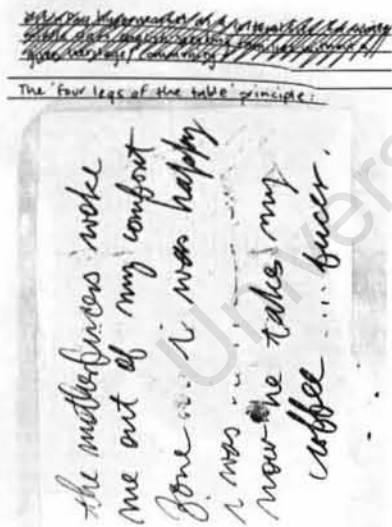
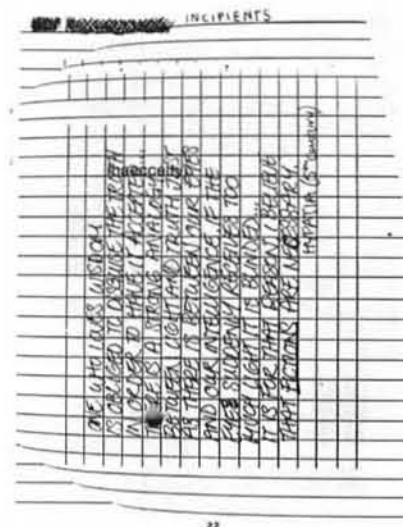
18

body (breasts); leaderless group; hunger art; money; dead horse; words with jobs; nothing; money

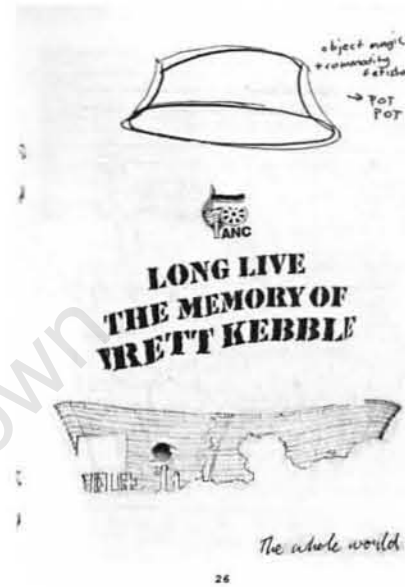


something to do; positions (artificer); universal athlete





positions (pirate); wild promises; body (excrement); hypatia; truth; escape



Brett Kebble; architecture (stadium); repetition; death

[illegible]

Jan of are Red.  
 Number: 10-2000 Name: Artificial  
 hymen for women, Brand:  
 Specifications: 2 piece, pink  
 Color: No Color Stock: Stock  
 Artificial hymen suitable for the  
 woman who with broken  
 hymen.  
 Put artificial hymen into the vagina.  
 It will inflate when meet warm  
 secretion and envelope the vagina.  
 The penis breaks the layer and the  
 hemachrome with the secretion  
 lay on the penis and vulva. It  
 looks like real blood very much.  
 The effect will be better if  
 the woman pretend feel pain  
 and say,  
 Ingredients: natural albumen glue,  
 medical expand element, Methylcellulose  
 and so on.

conscience  
&  
responsibility

We want a lake all the way from here to the beach and we will absolutely ask you!!

hello darling are you better?

printed 30

THEY ARE ALL SURPRISED  
THERE'S NO SURPRISE  
LIKE NO SURPRISE.



That my <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~living~~  
 in ~~unhappy~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~just~~  
~~happy~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~and~~  
~~manly~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~rich~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~unhappy~~  
 in ~~the~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~  
 that ~~every~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~cell~~

BILLY  
 BONG

1970  
 1970

Hand-drawn diagram of a simple circuit with a battery, four light bulbs, and a switch. The bulbs are arranged in a series loop, and the switch is connected to the end of the loop. Below the diagram are several rows of handwritten text in Hindi, which appear to be a list of items or a description of the circuit components.





34

illegal patterns.

war on

prescriptions.

Why bother with the law  
or morality/ethics unless  
we have capitalism?

The truth about our  
abilities always escapes:  
One day, a hundred thought  
to it that?

EPITAPH 1974  
The Kingdom of  
FS

35 actually full



35 actually full

Stand on the platform and shout  
the following at them. Change the  
order to suit. Use appropriate hand motion  
(circumlocution).

What is worth suffering  
for?

Have you got what you came  
for?

Suffer quietly please!

The weather is not a metaphor  
for anything.

It's time to get serious.

What's in it for god?

Oh, don't stop now! you  
demonstrate your impar-  
tance so well...

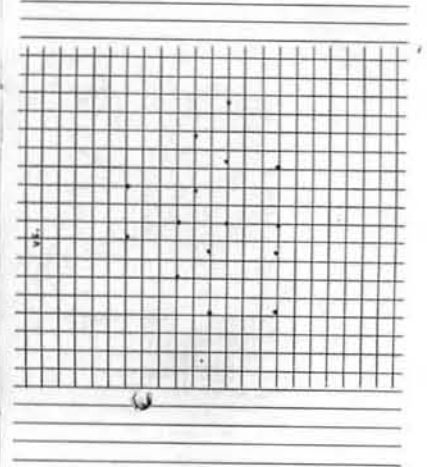
As my servant, I dismiss  
you

we could still live before then.

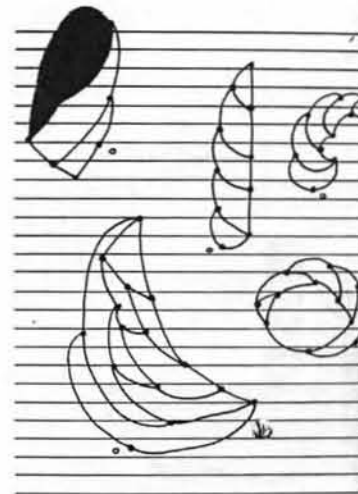
There is always more.



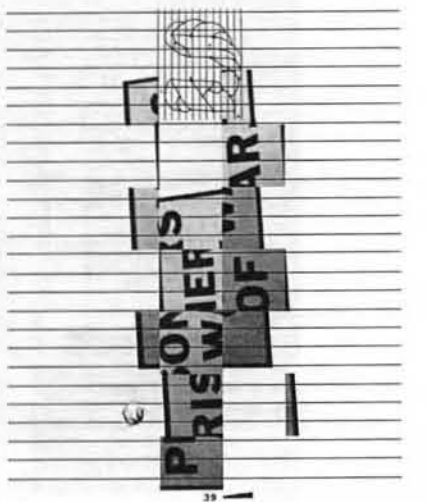
36 our outfit



37 the bags like



38 at this is true.



39

wave; zigzag; space-time (smooth); space-time (striated); language (word games); positions (god); positions (slave); the weather is not a metaphor for anything

play; positions (martyr)

38 This is true  
 37 The bags like  
 36 Our outfits  
 35 Actually full  
 34 All together now  
 33 98 About  
 32 On a truck  
 31 Some even  
 30 Painted  
 29 Gaseous, like  
 28 rino 2010  
 27 Our Group Portrait 4, 2009  
 26 Our Group Portrait 5 (centerfold), 2009  
 25 Our Group Portrait 4, 2009  
 24 "You are now, I am one, we are fourteen  
 23 Group Portrait, 2010  
 22 4 people, 2009  
 21 Diagram, 2009  
 20 Dying, 2010  
 19 Supervision, 2010  
 18 Our Group Portrait 3, 2010  
 17 Years Later, 2010  
 16 2010  
 15 It's time to get serious (Unfortunately it is),  
 14 Our Keywords, 2010  
 13 Broken telephone, 2008  
 12 Hulet's  
 11 Our Group Portrait 2, 2010  
 10 Close Enough, 2008  
 9 Understanding & Personal Service, 2008  
 8 Richmond, 2007  
 7 To Rick: Shoot Straight and Speak the Truth,  
 6  
 5  
 4  
 3  
 2  
 1

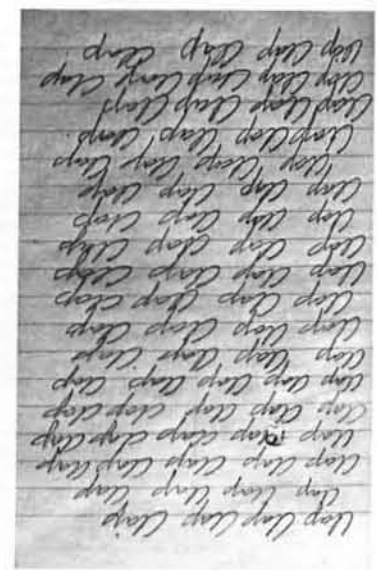
Inside cover  
 Acting On Orders No 44, 2008  
 Inside cover back  
 Our Group Portrait 1, 2009  
 Back cover  
 Acting On Orders No 53, 2008

# THE TRUSTEES

After a period of tentative assembly  
 as a band without any talent, skill or  
 rhythm, the Trustees became a more  
 generalized collective entity that  
 provided a reason to meet and perform  
 together - a contact point for our  
 mutual interest in a contact point for  
 our mutual interest in **YATA!**  
 appearances, art, audiences,  
 canned-chance, coercion,  
 collaboration, craft,  
 difference, exhibition, experimenting,  
 fate, improvisation, interactivity,  
 inversion, laughter, objects, meaning,  
 mimicry, performance, politics, the  
 present, relationships, religion,  
 reverse-alchemy, substances, tools,  
 truth, word  
 games, putting  
 words in each  
 others mouths  
 and the middle  
 of the road.



Clockwise from  
 top left: Francis  
 Burger, Christian  
 Merf, Barend de  
 Wet and Douglas  
 Gimberg.

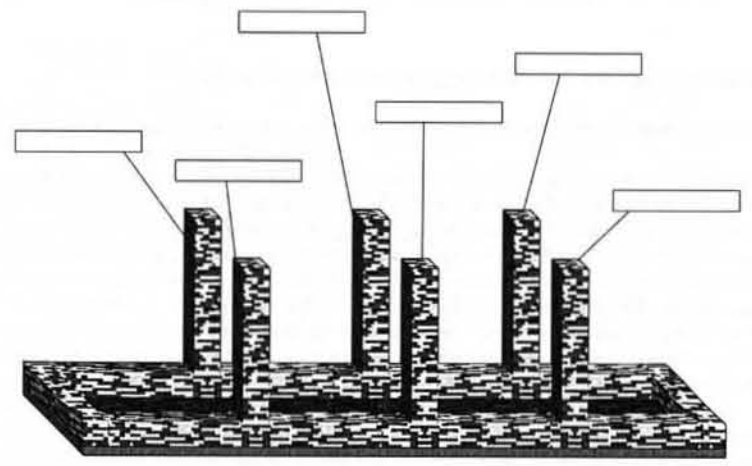


proximity



Jacques Coetzer; dry-run number one; sunshine; cacolydates

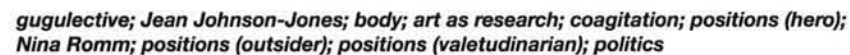
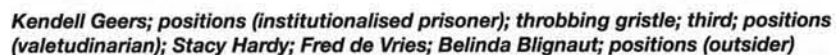
(Above) Documentation of Jacques Coetzer as the executioner performing  
 a short guitar solo on the balcony (as the closing to *Dry-Run Number One*,  
 Trustees, 2010).



early learning; six legged table; something to do; trustees

(Above) interactive diagram of the six legged table principle (after  
 Raymond Ackerman's 'four legs of the table' principle).







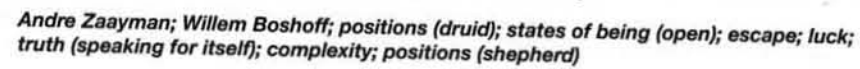
[illegible]

of kinds. — EXEDRA → the limits + constraints (black letters?)  
formed strong network of relationships  
would go to  
thought of it before  
Describes

[illegible]

**Ashraf Jamal; misery; joy; art history; dada; positions (hero); Kendell Geers; Rosenclaire; James Sey; language (as excess)**





WE MUST  
TRUST  
THE  
OBJECT  
(not  
the  
artist)

You have to  
escape from  
your prison

- Secret is to be able to see
- Clearn to be full of expectation

anosis not how + why  
but if you're  
closed ~~you~~ it'll  
never happen

74

the favour of  
me → the importance of  
training & coaching you  
(I had a strong go)  
he did well  
that's what I  
love

Two Möbius strips are shown. The left strip is twisted and labeled '1' and '2' at different points. The right strip is untwisted and labeled 'exhaustion'.

**exhaustion**

(Below) reverse hangman drawing (pen on paper)

**states of being (closed); superstition; positions (hero)**

(Immediately below) self-directed note.

*There is so much that my mind greets with a total lack of comprehension, blocked; whether or not the things that are here should be elsewhere and why in general this and not that or simply why this. I don't know and I couldn't even begin to tell you. Its all stopped up and absolutely impossible to begin an answer. Or, rather, I could say that I have a strange over-confidence and sense of entitlement to do this and not only achieve a degree but also actually convince others to do it as I have.*

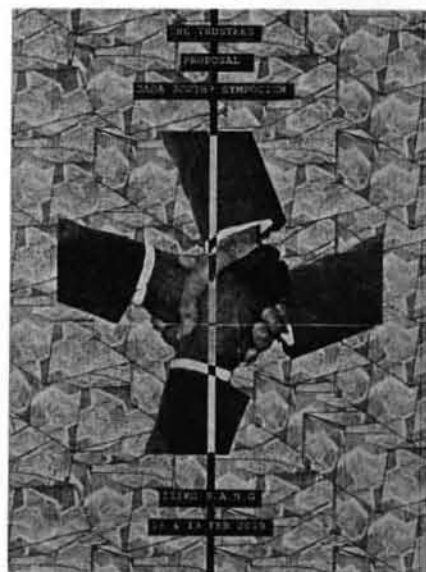
*Slow, tired, spent – half-cocked*





*trustees; trust; surrender; cacolydates; positions (blind); something to do*

(Above) trust exercises with the Trustees (Christian Nerf, Douglas Gimberg, Barend de Wet and Francis Burger) in Riebeeck Kasteel (Western Cape).



*trustees; Dada South?; dry-run number one (performance); experiment; coagitation; something to do*

(Immediately above) front and back covers of a proposal to the organisers of the *Dada South? symposium for Dry-Run Number One* by the Trustees. The booklet contained a collection of images and statements as well as lined blank pages. The resulting notebooks were then used by each member of the Trustees over the period leading up to the symposium. After scanning and sandwiching the contents of the individual notebooks a second booklet was produced and distributed at the symposium (see go home and play with your genitals/all and nothing).



*Barend de Wet; architecture (camping); repetition; something to do; unit; craft; elucubration; positions (fool); architecture (exedra); geography (garden)*

(Above and below) documentation from a 24 hour workshop with undergraduate Fine Art students at the University of Stellenbosch. The image immediately above shows students drawing Barend de Wet during a reenactment of his 2006 installation, *Camping*. The top image shows cardboard constructions made by the students after an object presented to them by Nerf (see box object B.B.100).

experiment; explanation; art as research; something to do; wave; positions (jack vs. master); positions (student); adulteration; direction; food; Paul McCarthy; space-time (smooth); truth (speaking for itself); utterances; states of being (myopic); conditions of making (making the conditions for making); intention; art as silent

Preparatory notes for a formal crit with the MFA staff group at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts (January 2010).

Admit to having exploited MFA as an easily exploitable free space (the only prerequisite being that one should create a body of work, with an accompanying text). Working towards a practice that can sustain itself beyond an institutional brief and/or the various techniques that easily afford occurrences/events/objects as art. Or rather:  
In my initial MA proposal the one point that has stuck, though its form has been adjusted, is the desire to forge an open space within creative practice that would allow the breeding of unholy ideas.  
Research led practice, practice led research (or practice based research).  
Interrogating the function of the various tactics that designate art as such – unlearning and deskillling.  
Experimentation and process as justifiable in themselves as essential components of art as research.  
Canned chance and hidden noise.  
Finding and tuning in to shepherds and/or don quixotes vs. sirens (direction).

#### Catchpoints now:

- Sauce (tactile submission – zooming in, focusing (“She’s not interested in anything at all, just the sugar, she concentrates on it”). (Paul McCarthy as a serious artist who understands the substance of sauce and its form beyond the spectacle.) Unexpected substances should now be seen as mediums rather than tactics, or rather, all mediums should be seen as tactics on an equal level.
- The catch point of being known/trusted as a practitioner who creates installations that look unconsidered but are in fact very considered. Why is it that the intentions of the practitioner still hold so much sway – (I would like to look regardless of whether it has been carefully curated, without the easy foot-up onto the pedestal of critical intention) – we must look as forensics, we must find the things ourselves, we must investigate, focus/zoom in and think.
- TIME, things to do rather than things to believe in (occupying vs. counting).
- Side stepping desire as understood within contemporary critical-theory, art-theory, cultural studies type discourse (desire as lack, objects as substitutes). Experimental practice as something to do – finding things that are not missing.
- Repetition as a strategy to promote a sense of familiarity with the objects on offer.
- Chance + fate and the thin line between them, canned chance (everything is planned, nothing is planned).
- The box will be everything and will be impossible to unpack. Greeting the sea on equal terms.
- The edge of a sphere could be walked endlessly without ever encountering a boundary.
- A theory of the universe.
- Dabbling (not mastering) – why the fact that our interdisciplinary meanderings are not up to standard is seen as a negative point (we are lucky enough).
- Nothing is impossible.
- Why the question of why is unanswerable.
- The middle of the road (“the infinite is not in sight but the roads toward it look promising”).
- Things that are unfinished can continue (the point is not to finish but to get to the middle).

#### When & why I started collecting in addition to (not rather than) making:

Encountering things that articulated something so close to what it was I was attempting to express/ finding puzzle pieces/ being in a position to recognize objects as articulations – speaking things – being in a position to hear them/see them / starting with the roundness, just an adjective that somehow embodied perfectly the sense of stuff that I was trying to deal with at the time/ life & art – life becoming overbearing, oversensitivity – swelling and leaking.

positions (student); explanation; Samuel Beckett; Jacques Lacan; weak logic; language (as an expression of nothing to express together with the obligation to express); the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice; box; chronology; Wilhelm Reich; Don Quixote; surface; architecture (cockpit); geography (constellation); repetition

(Below) reverse-side layout for A6 laminated cards distributed at a formal crit with the MFA staff group at the Michaelis School of Fine Art (January 2010). (Alternate front-side layouts are illustrated on following page).

#### THE INDULGENCE AND EXHAUSTION OF THE MEANINGLESS VOICE

From the outset of my MFA project I have attempted to develop a methodology that would allow for things to be what they are. A sustainable practice that could put everything in one place and maintain itself without pretense or the need for escape.

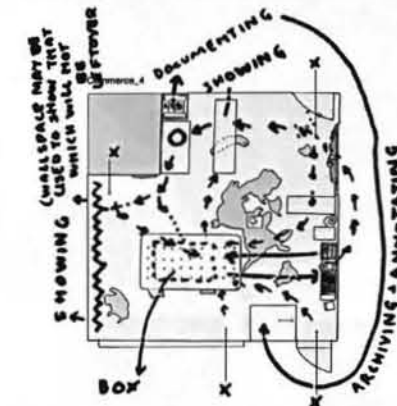
The project that I intend to submit will consist of two structures, a box, and a *chronology*. In combination they will house the flimsy network of events, ideas, citations, contradictions, sculptures, tactics, found objects, physical illustrations, chance encounters, triggers, holes, words and invertible principles, that I have cultivated over the past two years. While both of these structures seem inflexible and intrusively conventional, the box in a material sense and the chronology through its suggestion of logical progression, their formal restraints are superficial in the best possible way. Each employs a simple stylistic device, a line, as a plant surface that negates the need for depth (the only way out is through).

*“A weaker logic is not less interesting than a stronger logic, in fact it is much more interesting, because it is much more difficult to make it stick...but it holds up all the same.” (Jacques Lacan, My teaching, New York: Verso, p.32.)*

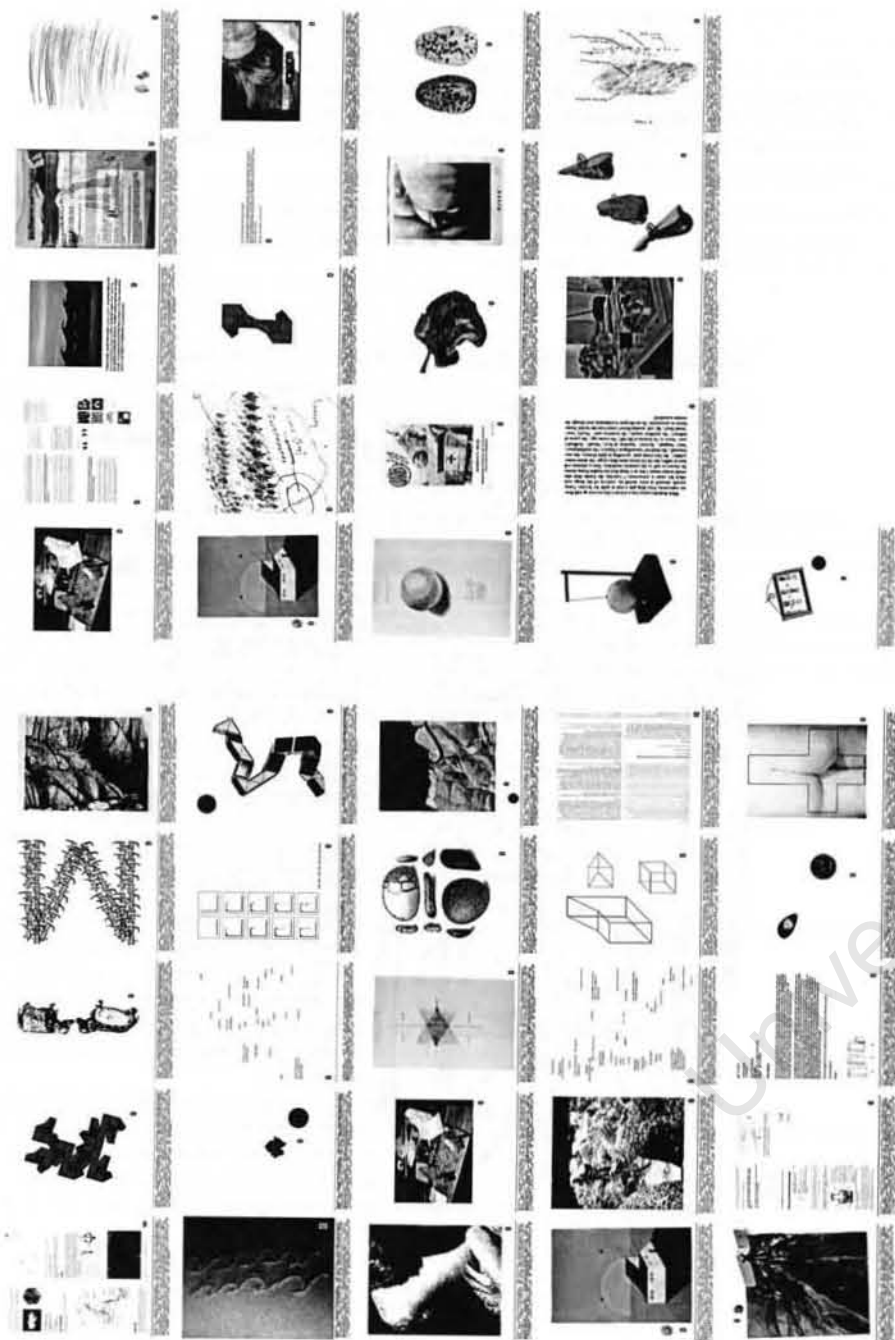
At a relatively early stage of this project I recognized that the expression of what I wanted to express (which was, at that stage, an adoption of Samuel Beckett’s “there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express” [1]) would not function unless the space designated within academic art practice for explanation, was sabotaged. The consolidation of a space that would allow object, word and/or action to perform, without ever allowing one medium to step away and illustrate or explain, seemed essential. The subjects of my project have expanded at an accelerating rate, from Wilhelm Reich to Don Quixote to smooth space-time to stones and apple cores, it has admittedly become impossibly esoteric and increasingly swampy. [2] The lines are here to save us.

1. Beckett, S. & Duthuit, G. 1965. *Proust and Three Dialogues*. London: John Calder. (1965: 103)

2. The positive consequence of this is that it is suitably obstinate and/or opaque so as to allow for an explanatory space that could not possibly commodify it, and which has no need to defend it.



Illustrated overleaf is a provisional example of a point in the chronology (and some keywords).



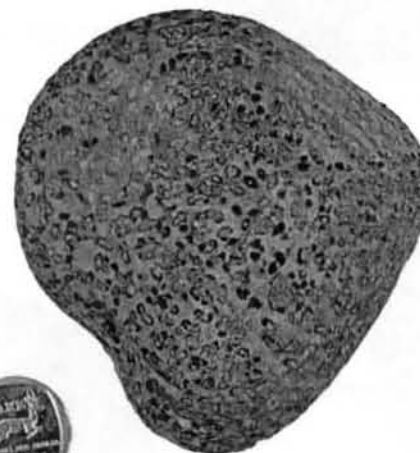
*rocks; body (appendage);  
conglomerate (superficial)*

(Above) rock with tar.



*stones; sediment*

(Above) concrete with cement and  
paint.



*stones; emollient; conglomerate (dot)*

(Immediately above) stone from Bloubergstrand  
(Western Cape).

(top-left) B.B.80.7.  
(top-right) B.A.21.  
(bottom) B.A.48.





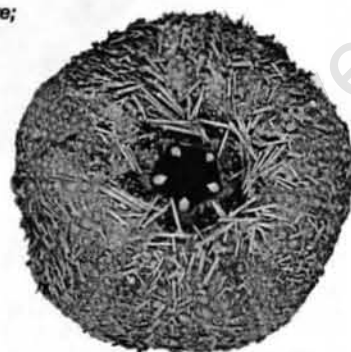
*body (genitals); crack; voodoo; states of being (static); magnetic totem; formless; direction*

(Left) brass, chipboard and balsa wood with enamel (constructed after Alberto Giacometti's *Suspended Ball*, 1930-31).



*things that are roundish; rotten nature; body (mouth); body (teeth); holes; architecture (trap)*

(Right) sea urchin carcass.



B.B.89. (top)  
B.A.19. (bottom)



*conglomerate; things that pick you up*

(Above) linoleum.



*rocks; emollient; conglomerate (bulgy); things that are roundish*

(Above) rock.



*magic; pricks*

(Immediately above) round headed screw.



*things that you pick up*

(Immediately above) steel plate from Franschoek (Western Cape).



(top-left) B.B.85.2.  
(top-right) B.B.85.1.  
(bottom-left) B.B.77.6.  
(bottom-right) B.B.76.3.





*games; architecture (exedra); something to do*

(Above) bronze and enamel miniature pool table.  
Received from Barend de Wet  
(made by de Wet in 1986).

*something to do; play;  
architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb)*

(Above) purple heart sticks.  
Received from Douglas Gimberg.



*third, alcohol, hunger art*

(Immediately above) plastic  
figurine (Andy Capp).

*pip; reasonable and  
unreasonable combinations;  
pricks*

(Immediately above) plum pip and  
green drawing pin.

**B.A.54. (top-left)**  
**B.B.80.3. (top-right)**  
**B.A.26. (middle-right)**  
**B.A.27. (bottom-left)**



*something to do; stoppages; architecture (exedra); process; positions (narcissist)*

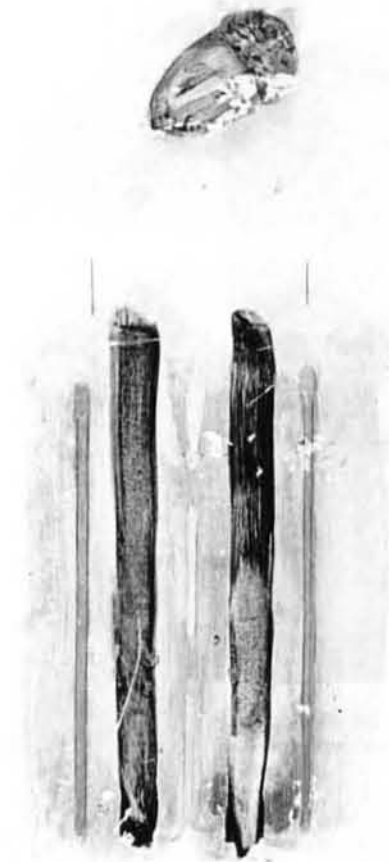
Documentation of reconfiguration of Michaelis studio. The last two images shown  
immediately above show the adaptation of the studio floor according to outlines of  
Anonymous (a dog) painted by Douglas Gimberg in December 2009.



*geography (strata); geography (paths defined by use);  
space-time (smooth); architecture (house vs. temple vs.  
tomb)*

Painted wood, cretaceous stone and sand  
assemblage with gold powder.

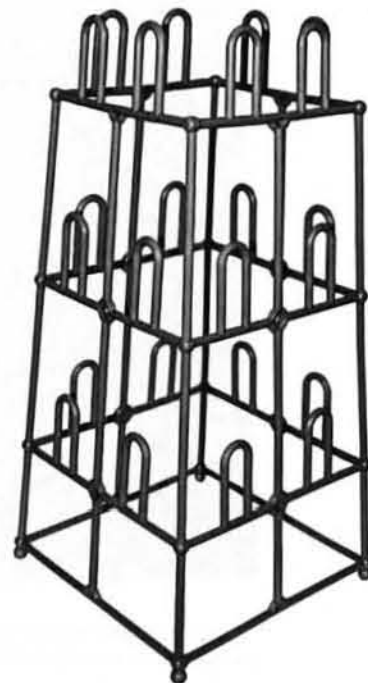
2009



*geography (paths defined by use); food (egg); line; magic; elucubration; body (teeth)*

(Immediately above) pencil and egg tempera on paper, gnawed over a series of nights by resident cockroaches at Michaelis studio.

*Marcel Duchamp; oneiric house; surveillance*  
(Immediately below) plastic shoe holder.



*information*

(Below) perspex information sign.  
Received from Margaret Burger.



*bifurcation; teasel*

Shoots from an unidentified creeper in the Titsikamma forest (Eastern Cape).



The return of satanic cults among children is a return to the sacred.  
The sacred in reverse, but sacred nonetheless.

What characterizes art is creation. They can say what they like, but here we come back to pride, to the Bible. There's a demiurgic impulse in art.

It's thumbs down for the gladiator.

I don't want to say more. I don't have a theory of art, and have no desire to invent one.

When people like Hobsbawm or myself say: "There has been a failure," then somehow hope becomes a possibility. Once again a real question, a truly real question, can be raised.

They continue to walk on nothing, as characters do in cartoons, and then they suddenly look down and fall. Right now, they are beginning to look under their feet, and they realize there's nothing there.

During the Baroque period, they had no compunction about displaying dead bodies anyway and it was both artistic and clinical. People were genuinely interested in what the inside of their bodies looked like.

**positions (satanist); art as silent; positions (demiurge); failure; hope; art as a black hole; death; body; Paul Virilio; Sylvere Lotringer; dissection; abstraction (as diversion); violence; fight fight fight**

(Below and following page) non-consecutive excerpts from Paul Virilio and Sylvere Lotringer's *Accident of Art* (2005). (Italics indicates Lotringer, regular text indicates Virilio).

*Conceptual artists viewed their work differently than philosophers would, but it is true that conceptual art had philosophical implications. Joseph Kosuth, who invented it, definitively conceived it that way.*

Yes, I believe something is really at stake in this aesthetics of disappearance. Conceptual art tried to transfer the silence of art into the language of the concept. What spoke was the concept, a speechless concept, speaking in place of speech. There was something extraordinary there, something that went well with our research. Conceptual art was one moment, a really great moment. Now it's over. Now anything goes.

The Voice of Silence

*In a nutshell, your opposition to the visual arts now is that things no longer appear; they disappear without even appearing.*

They disappear to the point of being totally eliminated. And there we have the metaphysical dimension of the phenomenon. Contemporary art is contemporary with all of it: the loss of bodies, the deterritorialization and disembodiment Deleuze analyzed. That's all science does: eliminate. Eliminate bodies to the point... Well, that's the question: to what point?

*The paradox is that art over the last twenty years has tremendously emphasized the body, as though it had to show it one more time before it disappeared altogether. It wasn't a rediscovery, or a post-modern resurrection, it was post-mortem before the fact. Freud also insisted on the symbolic power of the family at the time it started disappearing. And Lacan merely doubled it up by casting the symbolic (and the Father) into language. There is a kind of...*

\*...exhaustion.

\* Yes, but it's like a flush on the face of a consumptive. Sickness parading as health!

*Celine was wounded on his horse during WWI. Later on in Vienna, he was introduced to psychoanalytical circles, and by Wilhelm Reich's wife no less. He saw Germany on the edge of the abyss... Celine got the idea right away, as Reich did, that the masses were not fooled or oppressed; they were throwing themselves eagerly into the jaws of death.*

You can't understand the 20th century without the death drive.

*Still you have to admit that the death drive is triggered by something. You trip the switch and it all fires up, but first something has to trip the switch. Celine fathomed the deep desire for nothingness entrenched inside human beings, but he recognized that the "unanimous amoros, almost irresistible impatience for death" among the hysterical masses was almost always stimulated, provoked and held by stupidity and brutality. It fed all the way into the Führer's "suicidal state."*

This is something that comes out of the War in 1914. Take another war victim: Bazaine, the abstract painter I knew and who also used to make stained-glass—I didn't make any with him. They said to him, "Hey, you've become abstract." And he would answer, "Yes, you could call it that." But he preferred the term "non-figurative." He insisted that "abstract doesn't fit me." So they asked him when did this happen. "After the war," he replied, "my painting diverged all by itself." I wrote it down.

DISFIGURATION

the relationship between trauma + abstraction

*For those who were disfigured, disfiguration must have been a sort of figuration then. Abstract art would have to be looked at in an entirely different way.*

Yes, Rothko says as much: "I can no longer use the figure without destroying it, so I'd rather be abstract." I've known many other abstract painters, including de Staël, but for me Rothko was the greatest.

*So according to you, abstract art wouldn't merely have abstracted itself from representation; it would have devised means by which it could be level with the horror. Art running away from destruction, or preempting it retroactively by cleaning the slates.*

Abstract art is not abstract, it is an art of retreat. I was much criticized in the French press for my book. The editorialists said that I didn't understand anything about art. Get lost, I felt like telling them: you don't understand anything about the culture of art. You're specialists of this painter, of that style, of this genre, but you're incapable of articulating what emerges in an entire period.



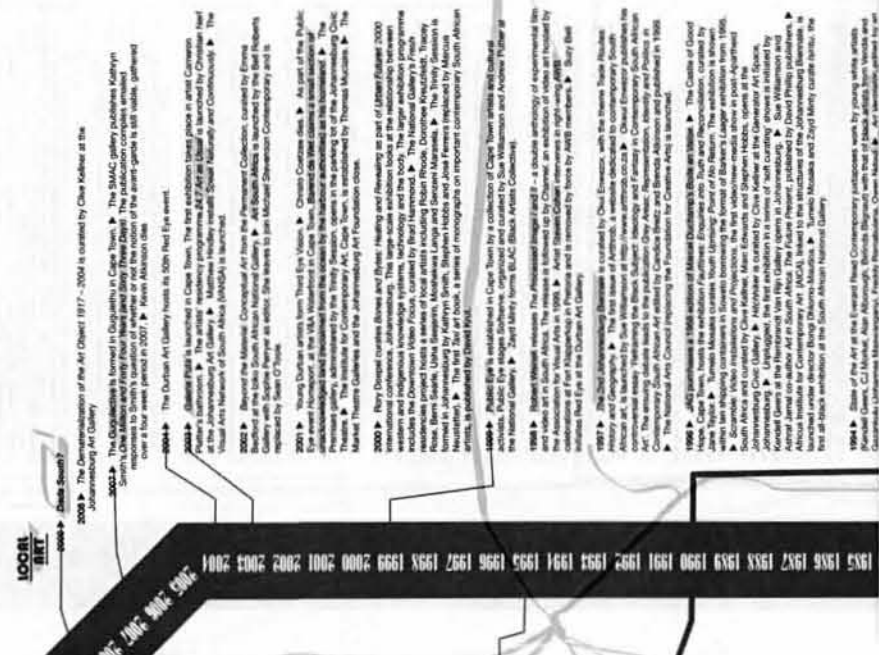
dada; hope; fight fight fight; Dada South?; Kathryn Smith; Roger van Wyk; Lerato Bereng; Christian Nerf; serialworks; South African art history; art history; history; reinventing the wheel; dead horse (riding); Private Donor

Front and back covers of the exhibition guide for *Dada South?* (12 December 2009 - 28 February 2010) at the IZIKO South African National Gallery. Curated by Kathryn Smith and Roger van Wyk with Lerato Bereng. (Guide produced by Serialworks.)



timeline; South African art history; art history; history; dada; Dada South?; experiment; fight fight fight; propaganda; research; architecture (exedra); reinventing the wheel; intersection points

(Right and following pages) timeline (produced and designed with Serialworks for the *Dada South?* exhibition guide) tracking the Dada movement and its reverberations throughout the twentieth century until the present day (with local and global historical context). (Illustrations show reverse side of A1 fold-out)







1913 1914 1915 1916 1917 1918 1919 1920 1921 1922 1923 1924 1925 1926 1927 1928 1929 1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935 1936 1937 1938 1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945 1946 1947 1948 1949 1950 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1956 1957 1958 1959 1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033 2034 2035 2036 2037 2038 2039 2040 2041 2042 2043 2044 2045 2046 2047 2048 2049 2050 2051 2052 2053 2054 2055 2056 2057 2058 2059 2060 2061 2062 2063 2064 2065 2066 2067 2068 2069 2070 2071 2072 2073 2074 2075 2076 2077 2078 2079 2080 2081 2082 2083 2084 2085 2086 2087 2088 2089 2090 2091 2092 2093 2094 2095 2096 2097 2098 2099 2100

1913 The Dada  
1914 The Dada  
1915 The Dada  
1916 The Dada  
1917 The Dada  
1918 The Dada  
1919 The Dada  
1920 The Dada  
1921 The Dada  
1922 The Dada  
1923 The Dada  
1924 The Dada  
1925 The Dada  
1926 The Dada  
1927 The Dada  
1928 The Dada  
1929 The Dada  
1930 The Dada  
1931 The Dada  
1932 The Dada  
1933 The Dada  
1934 The Dada  
1935 The Dada

**GIORGIO ARMANI**

## GLOBAL CONTEXT

- 1934 • The Berlin Conference, convened by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in Germany, settles the final partitioning of the last uncolonized parts of Africa.
- 1914 • *World War One begins* in August after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1893-31-6) and his wife in Sarajevo. Britain declares war on Germany. • Charles Chaplin makes his screen debut in the Muck Sarned film *Making a Living*.
- 1913 • The Klu Klux Klan is founded in Georgia, USA, selling anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism and anti-black racism. • The white supremacist • D W Griffith's *Liedie* - *Birth of a Nation*, a notorious depiction of Ku Kluxism and black

$$\frac{D_2}{D_1}$$





- [illegible]

musical performances by Nor Strömberg and Eric Satie

[illegible]

A black and white photograph of a stone relief sculpture. The central focus is a carved face of a man with a beard and a crown-like headpiece. To the left of the face is a circular stamp containing the text '1750' and 'Post'. The sculpture is set against a textured, light-colored background.

ndingaphu la phandle kokekuya  
namantzi kodwa notu ngaphandle  
kwe Dada "I can live  
without food and  
drink but not  
without DADA"  
Marshall O. Gross  
Nam andanokwazi  
"I cannot either"  
John Heartfield  
nditsho nam  
"Me neither"  
Raoul Hausmann

MY NIE VERST N REG W T  
ONS IS OING.  
WELL BESTE VRIEN E ONS  
VERST N IT  
NOG MIN ER ... EK S L  
LIEF E N IE  
SLAP MET IE POPE WEER,  
MY NIE VERST N?  
MY NIE HOES  
my - a uw dog  
"do nna bump"

Dada South?; Raoul Haussman; John Heartfield; George Grosz; hope;  
productive confusion; fight fight fight; propaganda

(Above) Dada South? flyers.



tomography; things that are round (sphere); architecture (house)

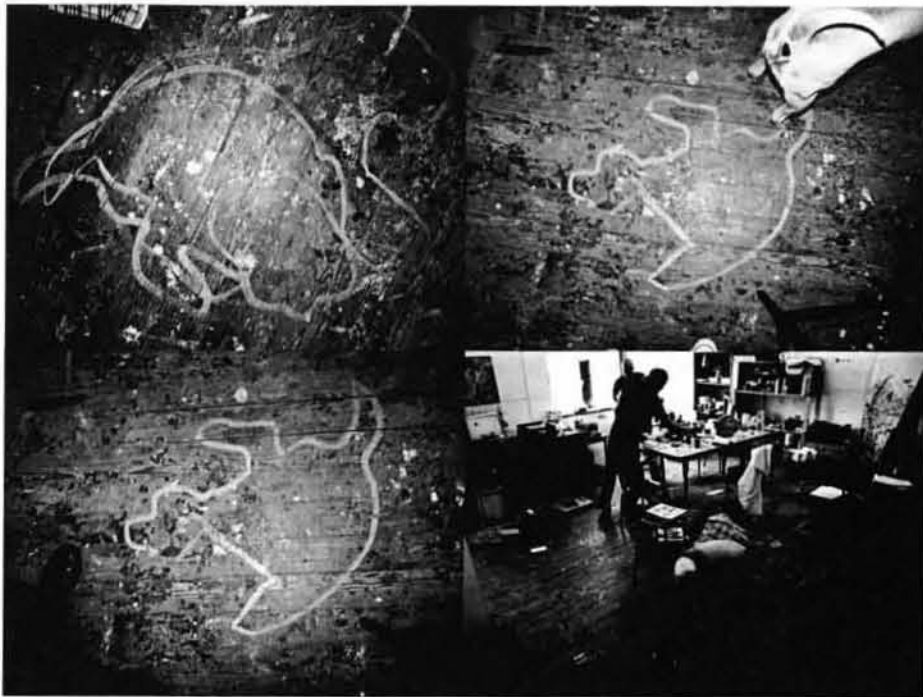
(Above) pages from a geography textbook torn and grated during a performance by  
Kimang Wa Lehlere at the opening of Dada South? (12 December 2008).



(Right) plastic figurine (Andy Capp),  
received from Ryan van Huyssteen.

(top) B.A.17.  
(middle) B.A.22.2.  
(bottom) B.A.27.





*architecture (exedra); something to do; Douglas Gimberg; Anonymous; third; stoppages; collaboration*

(Above) outlines of Anonymous (pictured top and lower right) painted onto Michaelis studio floor by Douglas Gimberg.



*body (blood); positions (fool); surface*

(Right) laminated paper with fake blood.

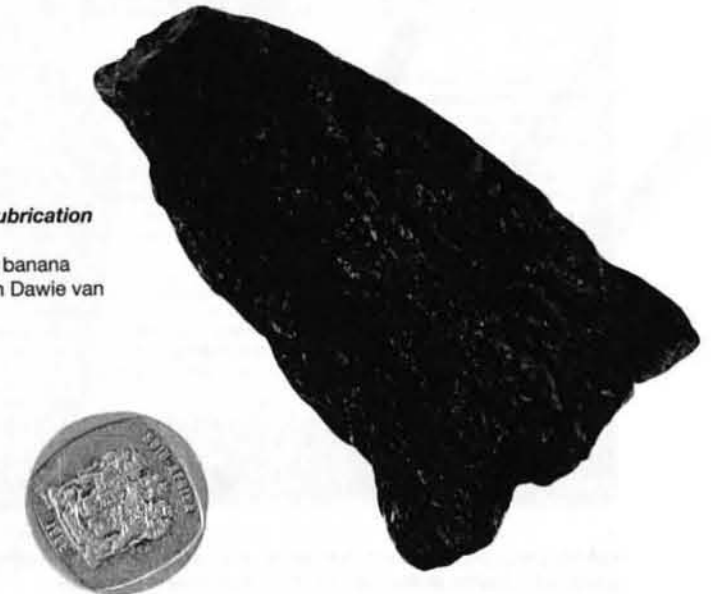
*rotten nature; food (apple); superstition; truth; adulteration*

(Right) apple core.



*food (banana); night soil; lubrication*

(Right) frozen and defrosted banana with vaseline. Received from Dawie van Vuuren.



(top) B.B.95.  
(bottom) B.B.76.2.

## Art Elements and Principles

### Principles:

1. Failure and Acceptance
2. Dealing with Time: time should be occupied rather than counted – find things to do rather than things to believe in
3. Truth: We already know that the truth is always new
4. The best way out is through: more often than not the thing that you are looking for is in the middle
5. Cynicism is the least empowering form of criticality
6. Things that you stick your nose into are seldom beautiful
7. Water dries... triggers
8. think twice
9. don't think, just do think / don't think now, do now think later - jump
- 10.

### Elements:

Processes: Research, events and/or encounters (meetings, chance [coincidental/surprising] set-up [inevitable], imposed [unwarranted], Destruction, (explosions and implorations), Alchemy: Provocation (agitation without anxiety), Sculpture (mark-making)

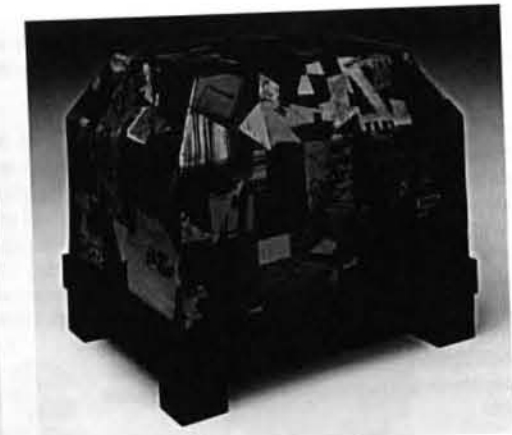
Materials: Surfaces, Found (encountered), expected (framed, manufactured, positioned), Words, style, rhythms, rhetoric (persuasions), art & artists, language, units, universal babble, Aphorisms (limericks, prose, non-fiction, fiction), Loopholes (tragic freedom, not escaping, not extended prison cells), Tricks and novelties.

Overlaps: Practice and existence. Everything and anything. Fever.

Exceptions (compromises): The market (charismatic men tell pretty girls to keep this it will be worth something one day), Money-making, Self-management (fierce individualism and egotism), the artist as a brand, Didactic conceptualism, Money, Gods and Masters.

**failure; pedagogy; process; bad lines; principles; propaganda; geography (strata); geography (paths defined by use); Henri Hayden; language (word games)**

Art elements and principles (background image shows Henri Hayden's *Les Sillons Rouges* [the red furrows], 1960).



**box; merz; architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb); Kurt Schwitters; conglomerate**

(Above) Kurt Schwitters, 1921 (left) *inlaid box SK or P* for Sophie and Paul Erich Koppers, Albert Schulze fabricator, inlaid wooden box with ivory and mother of pearl (right) *inlaid box for Anna*, Albert Schulze fabricator, inlaid wooden box (Dickerman 2005: 199).



**knots; hobbling**

(Immediately above) wax knots.

**Enoch's tears; Hans Arp; dada; abstraction**

(Above) Hans Arp, 1917, *Enoch's tears*, painted wood relief (Dickerman 2005: 66).

"In 1920 [Constantin Brâncuși] developed a notorious reputation with the entry of 'Princess X' in the Salon. The phallic shape of the piece scandalized the Salon, and despite Brâncuși's explanation that it was an anonymous portrait, removed it from the exhibition.

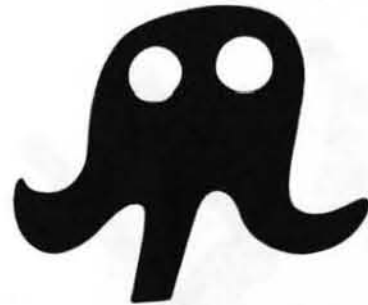
'Princess X' was revealed to be Princess Marie Bonaparte, direct descendant of Napoleon Bonaparte. Brâncuși represented or caricatured her life as a large gleaming bronze phallus. This phallus symbolizes the model's obsession with the penis and her lifelong quest to achieve vaginal orgasm, with the help of Sigmund Freud. Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, condemned orgasm by clitoral stimulation and praised vaginal orgasm with a penis as the superior and only legitimate type. His condemnation echoed the social mores of his era which condemned masturbation as both morally harmful and as a cause of mental disorders. Her search for the elusive vaginal orgasm led her to have two unsuccessful surgeries and numerous affairs throughout her life with wealthy and famous men" (Wikipedia 2009: sv 'Constantin Brancusi').

**Constantin Brancusi; Marie Bonaparte; Sigmund Freud; psychoanalysis; body (genitals); continuum of delights**

(Above) excerpt from Wikipedia (2008: sv. 'Constantin Brâncuși') on Princess X.

**magic; reasonable and unreasonable combinations; Hans Arp; merz; geography (sea)**

(Below) Hans Arp, 1923, *Merz 5, Arp Mappe: 7 Arpaden* (Arp potfolio, 7 Arpades, Merzverlag, seven lithographs (Dickerman 2005: 208). (Five of seven pictured.)



*Moustache Hat*



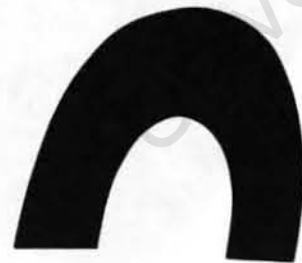
*Moustache Watch*



*Arabic Eight*



*Navel Bottle*



*Sea*



**Francis Picabia; long live Francis the failure; positions (narcissist); George Baker; daddy you scare me daddy please scare me; dada**

(Above) Francis Picabia, *Tableau Rastadada*, 1920 (Dickerman: 405). The writing across the collaged face reads 'vive Francis le raté' (long live Francis the failure) with 'papa' crossed out. The image is taken from an earlier portrait published in 391 which had the word papa in tact and read 'long live daddy, the failure' (see Baker 2003).



**Theo van Doesberg; dada; positions (I am against everything and everyone); third**

(Above) photograph of Theo van Doesberg, signed under the pseudonym I.K. Bonset (Dachy 2005: 353).



Francis Picabia; positions (narcissist); cacodylates; friendship; architecture (exedra); doctors; dada; body (eye)

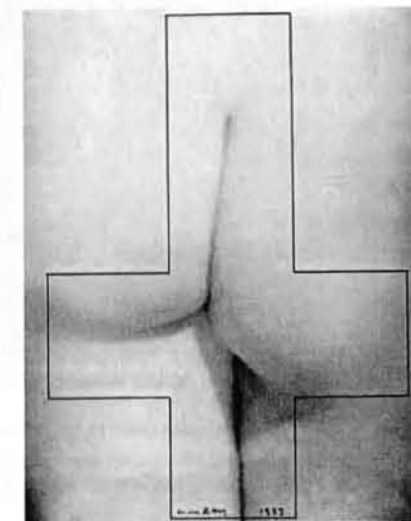
Francis Picabia, *L'Œil Cacodylate*, 1921 (Dickerman: 400).

"Picabia takes to his bed for a month with a case of ophthalmic shingles. To alleviate his depression, a parade of visitors helps him to create *L'Œil Cacodylate* (The Cacodylic Eye)" March 1921, (Witovsky 2005: 444).



Francis Picabia; holes; body (genitals); euphemism; things that are round (circle); the only way out is through; continuum of delights

(Above) Francis Picabia, 1920, *Jeune Fille* (Young Girl) (Dickerman 2005: 404).



Man Ray; positions (god); enantiodromia; crack; body (arse); continuum of delights

(Above) Man Ray, *Document*, 1933 (Dachy 2005: 540).



*partial object complete with missing parts; homeless object; voodoo; Willem Boshoff; discription*

(Above) sock used to transport CD's. Received from Willem Boshoff.

"In order to love something you need to have seen and heard it for a long time bunch of idiots" (A sandwich board worn by Breton at the Dada Festival in Paris 1920 made by Francis Picabia) (Baker 2003: 64).

"The only word that is not ephemeral is the word death... To death, to death, to death. The only thing that doesn't die is money, it just leaves on trips" (Francis Picabia, *Manifeste Cannibale Dada*, 1920 in Dickerman 2005: 459).

"Even during his lifetime he was beginning to realize that this was really an uncomfortable and ugly situation, people who mistook novelty for invention" Robert Barnes in conversation with *Tout Fait* (2009: sp) on Marcel Duchamp.

"There was the father we hated: Surrealism. And there was the father we loved: Dada. We were the children of both" (Michelle Bernstein in Zweifel et al. 2006: 46).

*Constantin Brancusi; Marcel Duchamp; Francis Picabia; Michelle Bernstein; Andre Breton; death; money; novelty vs. invention; dada; Robert Barnes; love; truth (the truth is always new)*

(Above) collected quotes.



*dada; 391; masters vs. daddies (the father we loved and the father we hated); laughter; body (teeth); cacolydates; leaderless group; collaboration*

(Above) 'several collaborators of 391' (Picabia's sporadic journal) illustrated in Baker (2005: 70). After taking a moment to consider the "liberating laughter" of Picabia (bottom, second from right) and his friends, Baker notes the unsmiling faces of Andre Breton, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard who would soon break with the Dadaists in a fairly violent clash and found the Surrealist movement.

"Hoe langer hoe boom,

Hoe platter, hoe krokodil"

*Private Donor; animals (crocodile); words with jobs*

(Above) quote from a private donor (roughly translates to 'how longer how tree, how flatter, how crocodile).





**unit; architecture (monument);  
something to do; early learning**

Digital animation stills.



**positions (druid); voodoo; luck; states of being (hyperceptive); stoppages; architecture (exedra); it is  
what it says it is; Willem Boshoff; Gimberg Nerf; third**

(Above and top) detail of Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg's *Close Enough*, three sets of catoptric divination objects made from partridge wood given to them by Willem Boshoff. Gimberg and Nerf carved two of the sets symmetrically from the initial set of 14. The initial set was then presented to Boshoff (shown immediately above throwing the objects).



*honky tonking; body (breasts); positions (fool); repetition*

(Above) stills from a webcam video set to the song *Honky Tonkin* by Hank Williams.

*unit; oneiric house; architecture  
(house); red room; reasonable  
and unreasonable combinations;  
something to do; novelty vs.  
invention*

(Immediately below) plastic, balsa  
wood, pin, chipboard, acrylic,  
sawdust and modeling foliage.

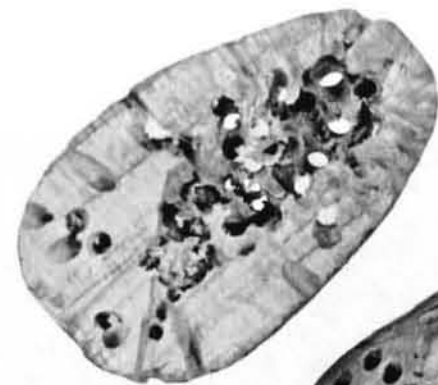


*reasonable and unreasonable  
combinations; things that  
are round (spheroid); food  
(chewing gum); body (mouth)*

(Right) chewing gum and  
nail-polish. Received from  
Christian Nerf.



**(top) B.B.84.1-2.  
(bottom) B.B.84.3.**



*holes; things that are roundish;  
mimicry; parasites*

(Left) carved pine, plasticine  
and enamel.



*assemblage; reasonable and  
unreasonable combinations*

(Right) brick chip with dried bostik  
glue with enamel. Assembled by  
Christian Nerf.



B.A.47. (top)  
B.A.24. (bottom)

*things that you pick  
up; things that are  
roundish; architecture  
(house); architecture  
(trap); exine*

(Immediately right)  
part of a seed pod  
from a Eucalyptus  
tree.



*things that are round (spheroid);  
stones*

(Above) stone from Bloubergstrand  
(Western Cape).



*knife-holder;  
body (plug)*

(Right) carved  
box wood plug.



*restraint; red room*

(Immediately right) rope  
with red insulation tape.



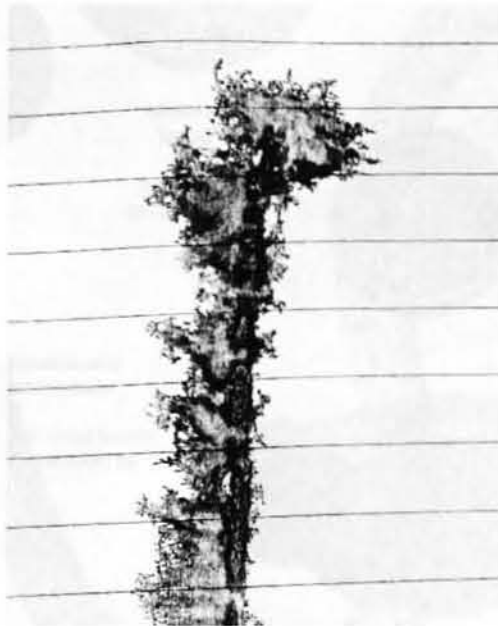
(top left) B.A.35.  
(top right) B.A.63.  
(middle right) B.A.13.  
(bottom) B.A.18.

**Church vanishes... brick by brick.**

The Church of Christ's Resurrection in the central Russian village of Komarovo was built in 1809, but in early October someone reportedly took it away, brick by brick. Father Vitaly, a spokesperson for the local Russian Orthodox Church, said: "We have sent a letter to local prosecutors. Who exactly did this, the investigation will show". The church was in an isolated area only occasionally visited by clergymen, so the disappearance was not immediately noticed, reports the Daily Telegraph. Komarovo is in the Ivanovo region, northeast of Moscow. The church was not in use, but clergy had been considering resuming services there. A survey of the large, two-storey church a few months ago found that it was structurally sound, but now all that remains are the foundations and sections of walls. "This is not an isolated case," said Father Vitaly "in many villages in central Russia, sites of historical interest are being dismantled and people suffer by being deprived of their cultural heritage". Theft of church property is widespread in Russia's rural areas, as is alcoholism, petty crime, and unemployment.

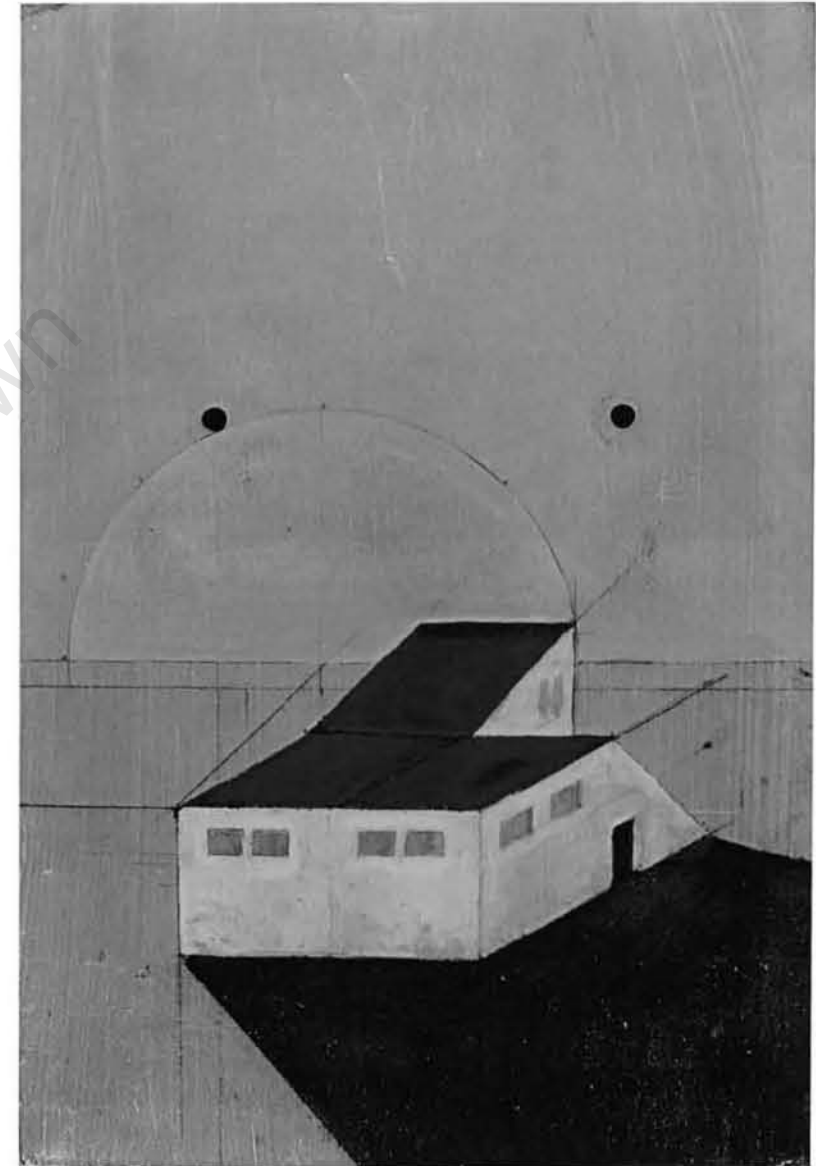
***architecture (temple); positions (pragmatist); desecration; geography (paths defined by use); magic***

(Immediately above) article from the Cape Times, November 13, 2008.



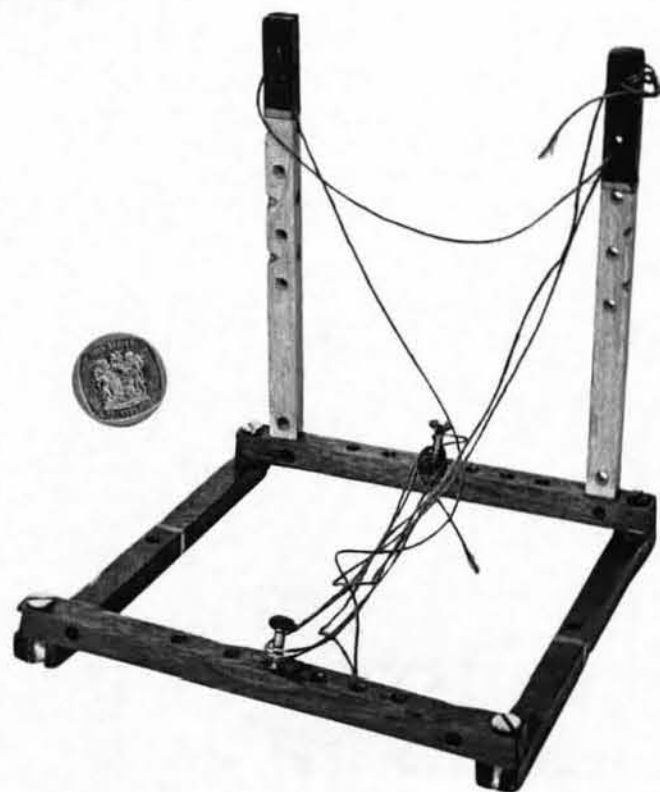
***body (blood); line; violence; states of being (exteroceptive); dissection; pornographic tendency; states of being (definitely full definitely empty); body (excrement)***

(Immediately above) blood on paper.



***unit; oneiric house; red room; epiphany; states of being (definitely full)***

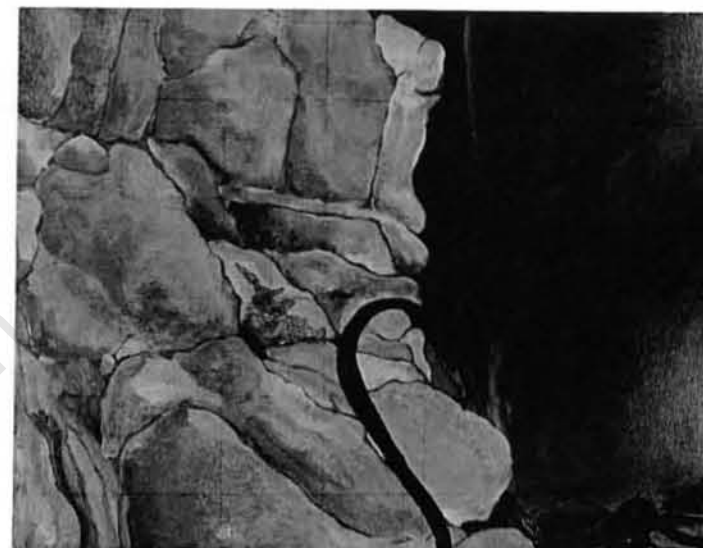
Acrylic and gouache on board.



*something to believe in; flow; space-time (smooth);  
novelty vs. invention; orgone; if it ain't broke don't fix it*

Maple and rosewood structure with conductive thread, copper tape and brass screws.

B.B.99



*art as an exercise in problem solving; geography (cave);  
rotten nature; kelp; painting and drawing from memory;  
repetition; Castle Rock; geography (sea)*

(Immediately above) photograph with grid taken at Castle Rock (Western Cape). (Above) acrylic, permanent marker and shellac on board.



**Johan Hugo; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; psychoanalysis; desire; lack; anxiety; wave; zigzag; words with jobs; epiphany; something to do; surface; holes; effect; direction; art; body (excrement); body (excrement); space-time (smooth); space-time (striated); kidney stones; body (calculus); art as a natural outcome; middle; geography (sea)**

(Below and following page) rough notes following a conversation with Johan Hugo.

*Creative procedures as effecting (the result of effect and that which effects); points of intersection (holes) as punctures/pimples that will spur things on (finding something to believe in vs. finding something to do). (How/where to move/find a direction)*

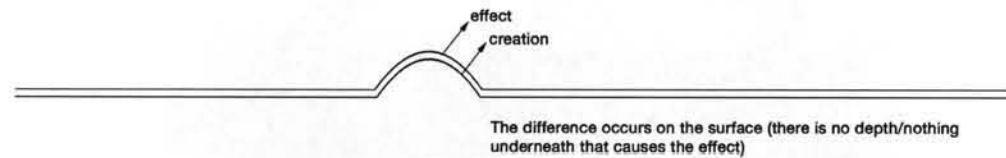
*Aphorisms as life stones – abrupt truths that demand a response.*

*Association vs. iteration (difference + repetition).*

*Experimenting with the inhuman (creative vs. destructive/entropic) procedures – can there be a human nature? (The human is always finite – unless it is incarnated as decaying flesh).*

*Orgone machines and the sea vs. kidney stones.*

*The movement of -ative/-ical/-ive/-istic (suffix) logic; perverse figurations.*



I started with the Massumi introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987), then I saw the fractals and the Serpinski sponge (things that I encountered a while back in a google haze) illustrated on pg. 487, so I moved on to Chapter 14, 1440: *The Smooth and the Striated*.

An expression of smooth and striated space (nomad and sedentary). Confronted and already engaged with an oblique subject of investigation (each is itself difficult to grab hold of and explain from the outside) the chapter proceeds by a different kind of description – presented as concepts, each type of space is investigated in terms of its hypothetical properties.

Art as a natural outcome (coming and going).

In Dualism, Monism and Multiplicities, Deleuze (2001) assesses the possibilities of desire as a [wave] rather than a [zigzag] (can these be the names of these modes, the one, smooth but still peaking and the other all highs and lows).

The fixation on lack as a cause: a sentiment attributed to psychoanalysis and identified as a failing of pleasure in Freud, *jouissance* in Lacan via Barthes, and orgasm in Reich.

Pleasure, Deleuze writes, “is a completely rotten (*pourrie*) idea. One only has to look at Freud’s texts, at the level of desire-pleasure, which amount to saying that desire is above all a disagreeable tension. There are one or two texts where Freud says that, after all, perhaps there are agreeable tensions, but again, that doesn’t take us very far. Broadly speaking, desire is lived as such a disagreeable tension that – a horrible, hideous word is required here, that’s how bad this thing is – a discharge is necessary. And this discharge, this is what pleasure is! People will have peace, and then, alas, desire is reborn and a new discharge is necessary” (Deleuze 2001: 96).

Later, he adds that the problem with those conceptions of desire that emphasize pleasure as a close relative of desire is that they “consider desire to be a dirty little thing that wakes us up, and that wakes us up in the most disagreeable manner: either by putting us in relation to a fundamental lack, which can then be assuaged by a kind of activity of discharge” (Deleuze 2001: 96).

Art and desire as intertwined processes: when considering art as having an end in something, as necessarily being something (strictly yet still inexhaustibly definable only by that which it definitely cannot be – ‘it’s a ..., a ..., it must be a..., it’s definitely not a...’) the art object and artistic production becomes an act of excretion, or a discharge...

Cathartic or not, the process of that terminates in the art object (moves on and rests once it has something to leave behind) suffers the same fate as that of sexual desire when it declares itself finished after an orgasm and leads to a series of wholly unnecessary and unfortunate performances (the politeness, the courting gestures, all to try and get at it again).

Treating art as a discharge: as if it is so fragile – resting so precariously on the point of success or failure, the most important thing, an all-encompassing present. Thumbs up or thumbs down. As if there will never be another opportunity to come. And then.

Do we try and sustain the intensity of production as with the moment of orgasm, where it and nothing else matters? Do we shit it out and try to preserve it as a relic? Do we try, as Deleuze’s (2001: 98) antithetical heroes do, and see the work of art as an “interruption, or an exasperation” of the process? Or, rather, as a necessary exhaustion, one that allows the process to start over. (Same process but with different intonation – the one, zigzag, where the achievement of the process is a wedding and a funeral, with all the sentiment, the other, wave, equally if not more intense, where the peak drops you straight into the middle of a new process...)

**leftovers; failure; positions (valetudinarian); Jacques-Alain Miller; Jacques Lacan; superstition; something to believe in; you lose your faith; states of being (hyperceptive); states of being (definitely full); accident; art as a natural outcome; art; dead language; Bili Bidjocka; surface; middle; it is what it says it is; monstration; states of being (coprophagous); indefensible vs. incredible; conglomerate; explanation; weak logic; appointed vs. disappointed; desecration; architecture (gallery); food; body (calculus)**

(Below and following page) notes following a formal crit (22 October 2009)  
at the Michaelis School of Fine Art.

**What I should have said (a few clarifications/tentative offerings).**

What was there. What could be seen. What was invisible/blocked/missing.

**Leftovers:**

A large part of this project has been focused towards finding ways to complicate the various strategies that enable things to be recognized as works of art, even to the point of complete sabotage (or failure). The description of the contents of my final MFA submission as 'leftovers' is a product of this undertaking – just as the food, cigarettes and pomegranate juice consumed in the space before the panel arrived served to deconsecrate the gallery (to suffocate the silence), the term 'leftovers' serves to preemptively defame the objects that I will offer up as art. I have grappled continuously with flexibility of the term 'art'. In one way I see it as an attribute that is too easily exploited – the ease with which the empire house trains things that are essentially wild and/or ridiculous is an ongoing problem (my 2008 seminar paper dealt with this particular problem in detail; a key point was that the utterance 'not art' performs a designation that does not necessarily rule out the possibility of its obverse - its implication is one of art, albeit with a question mark).

In another way, the very blurry line between art and other than/not art is exactly what our freedom to practice relies on – in such a state, art offers a space for that which is truly anomalous to breed, if only temporarily, in order to share its truth. The problem then, is one of pretense and gratuitous obligations – it should not be assumed that entry into the house of art requires a payment in kind. In a different way, it should also not be assumed that it would all come too cheaply.

I have faith in art. And it is because of this that I am convinced that the various courtesies that are afforded to it are unnecessary.

In Katherine Spindler's seminar Malcolm asked her whether she thought that the natural outcome of her studies would necessarily be art. Though it seemed at first to be a cheap trick (bringing up the always inconclusive debate of what art is and isn't) the question stayed with me. Not only because I am fixated on the idea of art as a by-product, an excretion that can in fact be accepted or even loved for what it is (without it being dressed up), but also because it really does seem to be an impasse. The detour that I am currently engaged with is that of the by-product that forms within a body without its knowledge, objects that form themselves (like kidney stones) and that supersede their host (things that can survive on their own).

The idea of a body of work as the leftovers of a two and a half year process stems from the above. To contextualise further, it started with an essay by Jacques-Alain Miller (2007: sp) on Jacques Lacan's later teaching. Early in the text Miller questions what the repercussions of framing psychoanalysis as a superstition would be, stating that "superstition, as commonly understood, is the cult of a false god. In the correct sense, it is reconstructed in etymology as *superstare*, what is held above. In the figurative sense, it is what survives, what remains, what continues to exist after its progenitors have ceased to be, it is something that describes what survives". Explained in conjunction with such an inversion, where generally derogatory connotations are subtly inverted, the idea of the leftover (the remainder, the leftover as superstition) can be seen to change its luck. Its dubious associations become fortuitous; it becomes a word for that which is absorbed and/or augmented instead of excreted or expelled (even to the point of being able to survive beyond the ego's decision as to its fate).

**Preamble (Another note on what it is):**

*A chapter without an object (obtuse, reticent, esoteric).*

*A demonstration of how form can be made to betray its content – in this case, a chapter of holes.*

In a short reflection on his artistic practice (IZIKO South African National Gallery, 09/2009), the Cameroonian born artist Bili Bidjocka spoke about painting as a dead language, a language that one can speak, but never without an acute awareness of having spoken 'it'.

Besides the obvious differences of intent (speaking/seeing), there is a difference in style between such attempts to emphasize the performance of form/material, of a surface, when speaking, and other interrogations that show how meaning is made after the fact. The performance of the surface happens in the middle of everything – it cannot be read without being seen (it shows).

The comparison drawn here points in particular to interpretations inspired by semiotics, on an informal level – the device used to distinguish between an interrogation/exposure of form that occurs during construction and that which occurs whilst reading (after the fact) is, of course, a superficial one. The temporal difference that is its basis functions only to emphasize the separation that occurs during the act of explaining/exposing when the object of study is removed from view (set aside in order to be viewed from a clearer vantage point). When speaking a dead language, for example, it is impossible to see it from the outside – its offerings are entirely esoteric. Such an investigation, through its refusal to separate itself from its object, is inevitably hobbled and can never simply proceed – it loops back on itself with such a consistency that each point of construction becomes furrowed in – *it is weak*.

To defend the inherent value of such a strategy is tricky, if not impossible – its structures resist any attempt to bring it into view, it is concentric, self-centered and need only refer to itself. It allows a wholly inappropriate communion between reflection and action, seeing and looking, consuming and excreting – it takes too much in and puts everything in one place.

The conglomeration (the text with the holes drilled into it) that is presented here as a manifestation of this – it helps, in its defense, to say that it is necessarily indefensible. It is what it says it is – it does not force any choices.

Short of adding a section for bells, and another for whistles, the perforations are an attempt to force things both in and out, but also to let the thing breathe – it is suffocating.

*To defend it, one could only say that it is necessarily indefensible (it is incredible).*

*WHY? How does it then speak?*

*There is, however, a certain kind of faith attached to all of this.*

*Do we have to reanimate the corpse (tricks and novelties) or is it better to look at it when its down, how do we treat it?*

*It is flexible to the point that it can incorporate even its opposites (inversions).*

*(Marking and being marked)*

*As with a corpse, one that is definitely dead and can be looked at without the fear of a return gaze (after establishing that it really is dead)*

*(The construction of meaning and its limits)*

*Reiteration.*

*A constellation of holes or stars and/or points of intersection, some dull, some sharp, some missing, some invisible.*



gold

shit

Institutionalized bowel movements (art as a natural outcome and/or asking the right questions).

The question of whether art is the natural outcome of a Masters in Fine Arts appears at first to be a trick question (but still a riddle rather than an impasse) – my sense of it at this moment is that the question of art, not art, costs a lot and offers little.

"...there are periods where words lose their salt" (Cabanne 1971: 90).

It is my hope that what I will have made of my time here will have the strength to force such debates to be left at the door. (This, amongst the many other dreams I have of how to explain that the things I have to show you today are like hay in stacks of needles. One does not have to play the fool in order to appreciate the value of fool's gold).

It seems quite simple that much of what I have to show you today is quite obviously not; these are just rocks.

*I am in a depression.*

*\* Focus – things that are incredible \**

*\* Abstraction – cohabitation – bastard children \**

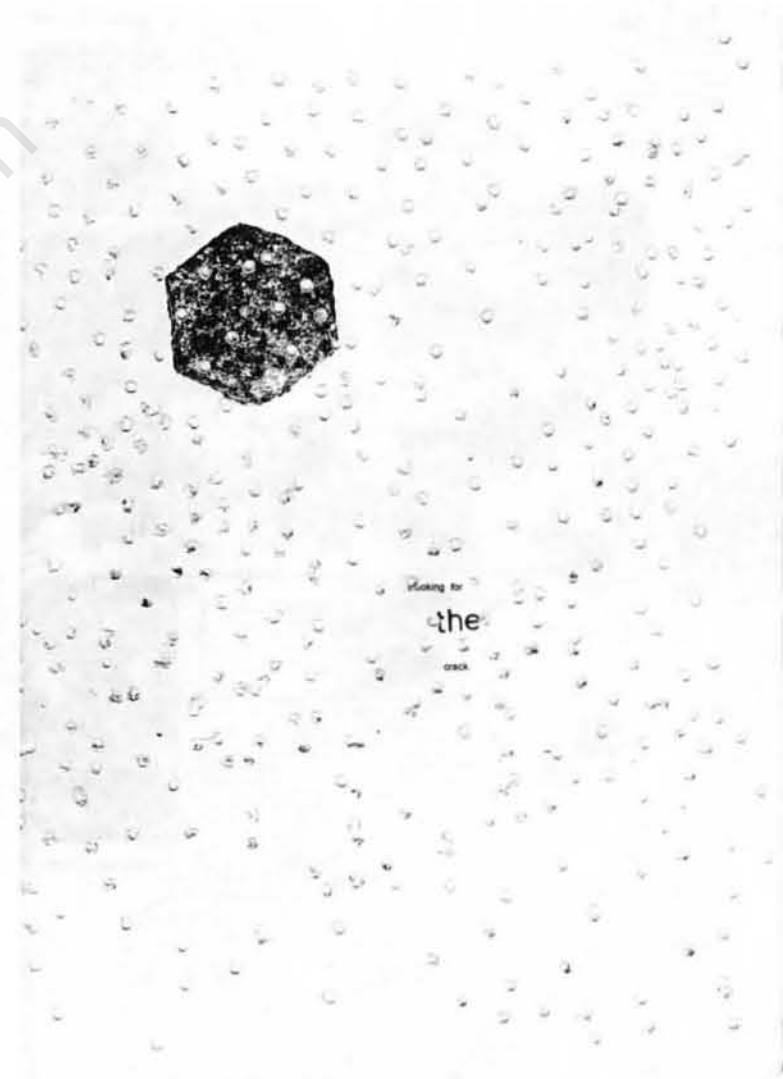
*(I am in the middle of something)*

**box; art as a question; positions (exhausted); institutionalized bowel movements; art as a natural outcome; fool's gold; gold; shit; positions (hysteric); rocks; blue; exhibition; architecture (gallery); accident; noses; indefensible vs. incredible; middle; desecration; pornographic tendency; food (bread); food (parsnip); food (apple)**

(Above) documentation and preparatory note for a formal crit in the Rosedale gallery at the Michaelis School of Fine Art (22 October 2009).

**conglomerate; holes; positions (hysteric); states of being (definitely full definitely empty); the only way out is through; crack; erotic tendency**

(Below and following pages) selected pages from *Conglomerates*, booklet with drilled holes produced for a formal crit at Michaelis (22 October 2009). Additional keywords are listed sporadically underneath illustrated page spreads.



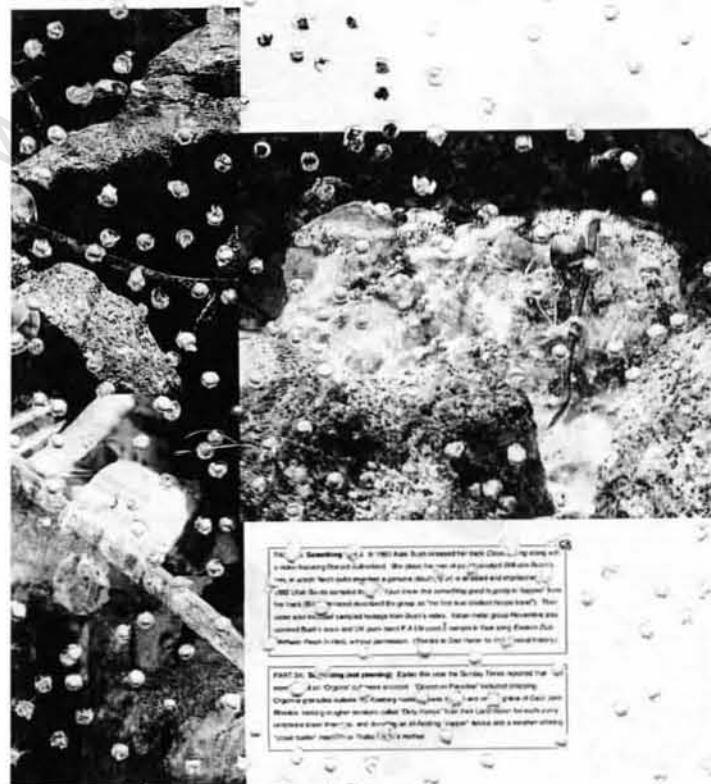
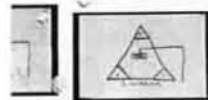
you can never step  
in the same river twice / 418



**Example - Plato's**  
 Theory of Ideas  
 Aristotle (384-322 BC)  
 If someone used to study in an  
 airplane, he would be "accustomed  
 himself" to the noise. He would  
 become "inured" to the noise and  
 would tolerate other things. To  
 "inure" is to accustom, to bring up  
 the "ear" to the noise, to bring up  
 the "soul" to the ideas.



waves/swells/ab sion

[illegible][illegible]

A diagram showing a cross-section of a cell. The nucleus is labeled 'Nucleus' and contains a smaller, darker region labeled 'Nucleolus'. The surrounding cytoplasm is labeled 'Cytoplasm'.



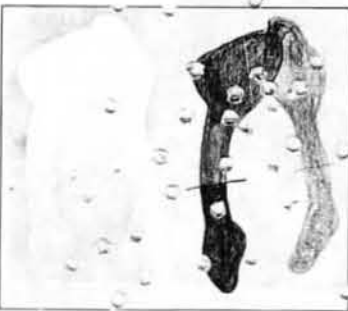
things that are round

(Practice as a special test: abstraction for art)

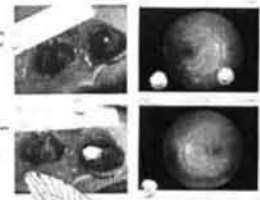
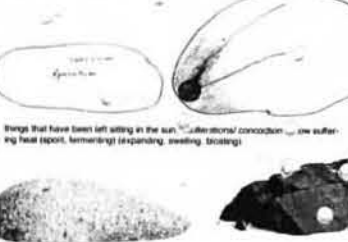
Stones + rocks

Collecting things that are round and hard (picking growing fungus/mosses/depressions)

leaving



things that have been left sitting in the sun... suffering heat spots, fermenting (expanding, swelling, frothing)



OBSCURE SPHERES/OBSCURE SPHERES (ORGANS, MAMMARYS)



Hans Haacke 1964. Spheres in oblique air

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)

(from "new world" by Hans Haacke)



leftovers; growing stones

Instilled, organized bowl movements (is art as a natural outcome of... and/or asking the thought question?)

words "It is perhaps that information is a myth and that language is not essentially informative" (Deleuze & Guattari 1977: 22) "...language is not made to be believed but to be obeyed" (as a "teacher" does)

Once do we proceed without knowing how do we practice so that... will learn us to heart, and believe us long after we are dead? (How do we get much to work?)

abstraction (vs. figuring)

round things

that are hard full, swollen

that are soft (hollow)

obtuse + truse

oblique

whole

hollow

organs

mammarys

containers

spinning

rotting

poping

rotting

spinning

rotting

poping

rotting

spinning

rotting

poping

rotting

spinning

rotting

poping

rotting

spinning

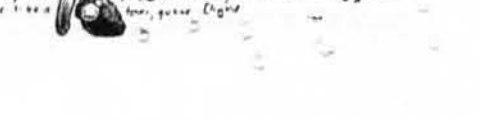
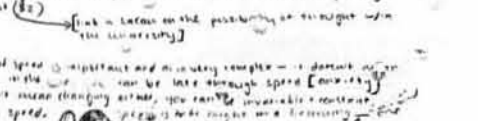
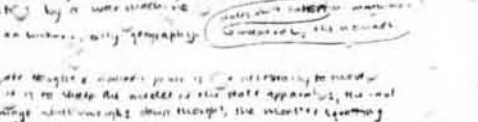
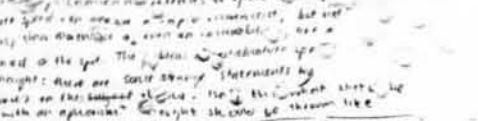
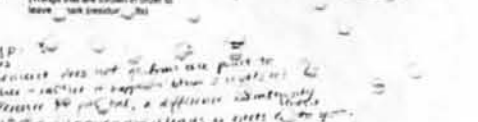
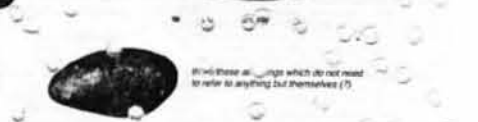
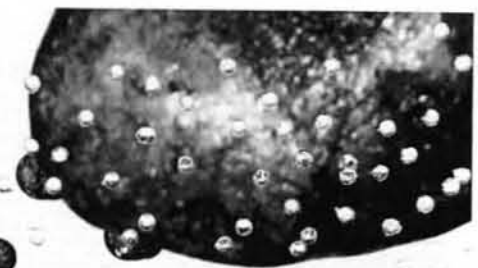
rotting

poping

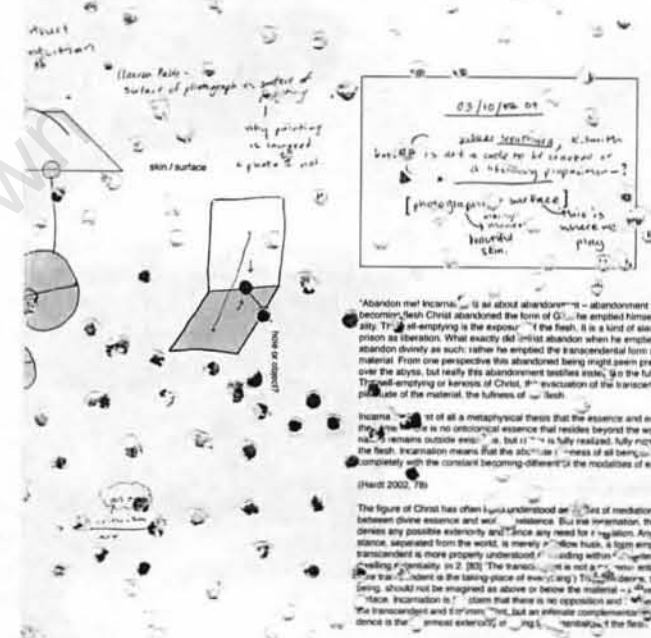
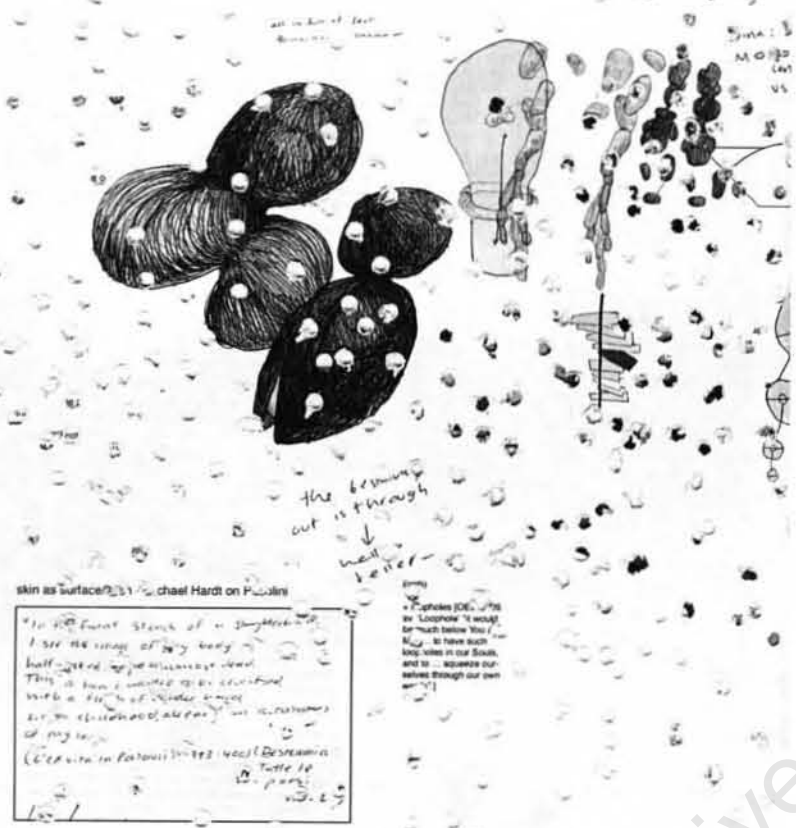
rotting

spinning

rotting











A second attempt at inventory (piles)

44

Holes that are yellow, smoother, or (depressed) made by repeated suction, shallow, smoothed over, but (rare) (7).

is to speak of things (this should all be written in the pluperfect. What a mess to speak of bicycles and horns. Unfortunately it is not of them I have to speak, but of her who brought me to the world, rough, but she did it for me). My mother is called 'F. Hanne' and she is 'Bilzant'. (Möyö p. 18) (8); holes that are dugged (Jewett) (9).

opening doors  
removing doors

PROV 27. *Any  $\lambda$ -term  $t_{\text{any}}$  can be* To find a rule that is simple enough to express something of the  $\lambda$ -calculus that is strong enough to  $\lambda$ -calculus, it is to be said again, without the  $\lambda$ -calculus of a  $\lambda$ -term  $t_{\text{any}}$  or  $t_{\text{any}}$  is  $\lambda$ -calculus constructed experimentally without any control.

Do you forget about the need to escape or do you no longer need to breathe? You'll never get out of diving circles, digging and and come in traps?

If you spend time making mistakes, the rules, when you come out have drawn the lines, you don't try and cheat yourself out of a disguised win.

and vi. holes

gaps  
gaps  
hiding places

work structures

baskets

Don Q  
helmet

things that are the same

repetition

 Springer

"Becoming does not happen in that way. In becoming there is no past nor future – not even present, there is no history. In becoming it is, rather, a matter of involuting; its neither regression nor progression. To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that very reason populated." (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 29)

[illegible]




**holes**

**desire**

institution

nature bod

the voice      anxiety

There are different tactics/strategies of approach:  in an experimental space (rather than hypothetical), when one stays within a collapsible/preservable/fitting structure, things can be thrown out either way and retrieval of the same (choosing/trying on the opposite  on the one no longer works – since everyone knows now that opposites  not possible at all) but not without care, each move (each experiment) is a risk since there are no controls.

(When sitting in underground structures that are loosely built by bent iron we should not expect that they won't give in; subterranean, we should be prepared to become to go under) become subterranean, if only until \_\_\_\_\_ need savanious arrives. (This seems plausible, but, again, a bent iron is not necessarily weaker, it is stronger, battered, and pliant, but still toothed and roto, \_\_\_\_\_ 10m years of constant she \_\_\_\_\_). It could go either way (77)

<sup>10</sup> It's too late for me (I gave up before birth) (Beckett 198).

Because they've said too much to be born  
and said too much in being born  
...t to be reborn  
and take a body  
(Arturo, 1999: 68 in "Volume 2002, 68")

Enna va Jodite (the Fragment) + being in love with everything (taking what you get) – when that which was open becomes loose. (The experience of vigilant and clamorous home.)

\* "here are periods where words lose their salt"  
Marcel Duchamp in conversation with Pierre Cabanne  
(Cabanne 11, 90)

The things that I make will not always be attractive, or presented as things that are attractive. Some of them will be dull, flat, shapeless depressions, or none of them will be taken.

It seems quite simple that much of what we have to show you today is quite obviously not; they are just rocks.

Leaves in a place where nothing is doing as equilibrium is reached.

Surface

cross section

displacement

PRESSURE

displacement

displacement

weaker logic is not less interesting." On a stronger logic, in fact it is  
 ach more interesting, because it is much more difficult to make it  
 ck out it holds up all the time."  
 Jacques Lacan, My teaching, 2008, p.32.1

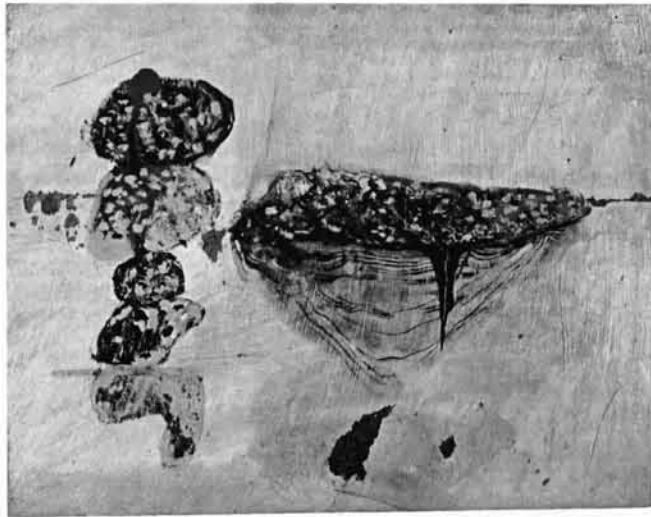
"In everything you have written there is a threat of an image of thought which would impede thinking, which (could) impede the exercise of thought. Nevertheless you are not a Hegelganger. You love the grass rather than the field and the forest. You do not say that we are not yet thinking, and that there is a future of thought which plunges into the most immemorial past, and that, between the two, 'everything would be hidden from view' (Deleuze & Parnet 1977: 96).

LOOKING FOR (vs. hunting, vs. finding) SOMETHING (finding for something).

HOLZWEGE + RUNDWEGE

HOLZWEIGE + RUNDWEIGE

143



geography (swamp); tomography; stones; geography (strata); yellow

(Above) enamel, pen and shellac on board.

The truth is always new.

"As one such prince of words wrote - I mean Max Jacob, poet, saint, and novelist, through whose fingers the threads of the ego's mask seem to slip of their own accord - in The Dice Cup if I am not mistaken: the truth is always new" (Lacan 2006: 157).

"Let's start again. We obviously have to take things one step at a time. The first step is that of the truth. After what psychoanalysis has said about the truth, or what they think it has said, since it began to talk, it no longer impresses anyone. Naturally. When something has been said and said again enough times, it becomes part of a general awareness. As Max Jacob used to say... 'the truth is always new', and if it is to be true, it has to be new. So you have to believe that what truth says is not said in quite the same way when everyday discourse repeats it" (Lacan 2008: 19).

**Jacques Lacan; Max Jacob; truth (speaking for itself); indefensible vs. incredible; states of being (open); positions (saint)**

(Immediately above) excerpts from Lacan (2006; 2008).



**Demosthenes Practising Oratory** by Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Nouy (1842-1923). Demosthenes used to study in an underground room he constructed himself. He also used to talk with pebbles in his mouth and recited verses while running. To strengthen his voice, he spoke on the seashore over the roar of the waves.

**Demosthenes; announcements to the universe; body (mouth); voice; architecture (trap); geography (sea)**

(Left) excerpt from Wikipedia (2009: sv 'Demosthenes').

#### How to Make Orgonite "TowerBusters" (TB's)

From Don Croft's *Gifting Compendium*:

1. I use non-stick muffin pans but of course the resin contracts as it cools, so even the cheaper ones work fine.
2. While you're in WalMart getting those pans, and if you don't have any little pieces of quartz on hand, go to the craft section and get the mesh bags of tumbled rocks (the smaller rocks). Pick out the quartz and other crystals. You can also get bits of quartz from the soil or streambed if you have a clue what to look for. The cloudy, even white, broken bits are just as good as a ten dollar Herkimer Diamond, of course, for this application.

If you opt for the dollar bag of WalMart polished stones and are unsure that you can spot quartz on the ground or creekbed, find the ones that are semi-transparent and/or dirty-looking inside. The white ones are often just marble, which is not as good as quartz but is adequate for TBs. You can get suitable quartz crystals by the pound from Gladys Bridges, but I mention WalMart to show you that it's not hard to find ingredients. Gladys sends out distinct quartz pieces that are between a quarter and a half inch long. You get a LOT of crystals in a pound.

3. Drop a small xtal in each muffin mold. I often use a broken just a dirty, broken crystal chip about the size of your little toenail but if you're new to this you likely won't feel confident doing this. My confidence is based on a couple of years of towerbusting experience, so I know that a TB with a funky little chip will bust an average Entropy tower and I'm stating it for the record.

4. Fill the molds almost to the top with loose metal. Remember that 3oz is sufficient and that the molds are each 4oz. I want you to get the absolute most bang for your hard-earned or even lazily-obtained buck. 3oz of orgonite in a holly or juniper bush is sufficient for busting most of the single transmitters you'll encounter and even for turning these frowns of a chapel-full of devil-hating churchgoers upside down.

5. Pour the resin in by stages until it comes almost up to the brim of the mold after you've put the metal and crystal in. If the metal is too fine to permit the resin to soak through before hardening, mix the metal with the catalyzed resin, then spoon it in like you're making cornbread. You're probably going to learn the hard way to mix in the catalyst first. I'm still learning that lesson from time to time :-)

6. When I'm going to toss out a bunch in town, I paint them green and brown (camo scheme). You'll be surprised how difficult these are to find once they've been tossed.

#### How to Make Orgonite "Holy Handgrenades" (HHg's)

From Don Croft's *Gifting Compendium*:

1. Fold a piece of typing paper twice and then open it into a cone shape. Tape the overlap and underlap with masking tape to help it hold its shape.

2. After you've shaped it into a cone, put the opened cone upside down in a paper cup.

3. We cut a 26" length of 18 gauge copper wire and form it into a clockwise cone spiral (it resembles the tip of a big screw) so that it fits loosely inside the paper cone. You can make it pretty rough or get one of Christy Murphy's nifty



**Wilhelm Reich; orgone; something to do; craft (hobby); flow; positions (quack); rocks**

(Immediately above) excerpt from 'Don Croft's gifting compendium' (<http://educate-yourself.org/dc/giftingupdate18jul05.shtml>) on how to make 'towerbusters' and 'holy handgrenades' which channel orgone energy (a manipulable form of energy described in the writings of Wilhelm Reich. Produced and distributed in public spaces by followers of Reich and supporters of orgone energy, the grenades and towerbusters purportedly counteract negative energy currents emitted by various sources such as cellphone towers.



*orgone; something to do; craft (hobby); flow; rocks; geography (sea); emollient; positions (jack vs. master); Christian Nerf; third; something good*

Holy hand grenade and cloudbuster (objects modelled loosely after those described by supporters of orgone energy) installed at Saunders Rock in Sea Point (Western Cape). Constructed and installed in collaboration with Christian Nerf as an exercise in enthusiasm.

*Because they've said too much to be born  
and said too much in being born  
not to be reborn  
and take a body*

Antonin Artaud, from *dix ans que le langage est parti*, in Massumi (2002, xiii).

"...he [Deleuze] discovered an orphan line of thinkers who were tied by no direct descentance but were united in their opposition to the State philosophy that would nevertheless accord them minor positions in its canon. Between Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson there exists a 'secret link constituted by the critique of negativity, the cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the exteriority of forces and relations, the denunciation of power'" (Massumi 1987: xi). "...nomad thought ... 'replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds'" (Massumi 1987: xii). In his own work and in his collaborations with Guattari, the excitable force of Deleuze's thought is attributable to his continual agitation of those assumptions that others seem to have already taken for granted.

Within a poststructuralist, postmodern context (this context) there are certain dirty words (words that we are taught to regard with the utmost suspicion). Citing the key presumptions ("the interiority of individual life, its rationality...the possibility of transparent transmission between privacies or between the private and the public, and the notion that what is transmitted is fundamentally information") that have rendered 'communication' suspicious if not untenable, Massumi (2002: xiii) places the blame for the exposition of these on structuralist, poststructuralist, postmodern and postpostmodern thought and notes that "communication has long since fallen on hard times and with it, expression". Taking on expression as a tenable rather than a tentative notion is, as Massumi (2002: xiv) notes, a radical step within a poststructuralist climate... "so closely bound have the concepts of expression and communication become that Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on discarding one while retaining the other might well seem quixotic".

"Traditionally, for communicational purposes, expression is anchored to a 'content'. The content is viewed as having an objective existence prior and exterior to the form of its expression (Massumi 2002: xiv).

"One can never assign the form of expression the function of simply representing, describing, or averring a corresponding content: there is neither correspondence nor conformity" (Deleuze and Guattari in Massumi 2002: xiv).

IT IS WHAT IT SAYS IT IS

*Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; Brian Massumi; joy;  
fight fight fight; language (the arbitrary nature  
of the sign); language; utterances; structuralism;  
poststructuralism; postmodernism; flow;  
indefensible vs. incredible; Antonin Artaud; voice;  
something to do; geography (territory)*

Excerpts from Brian Massumi's introduction to *A Shock to thought, expression after Deleuze and Guattari* (2002).





*body (nose); noses; partial object complete with missing parts; truth; trustees; cacolydates; conglomerate (superficial); voodoo*

Liquid plastic noses with steel, shellac and enamel cast from Barend de Wet, Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg.

B.A.44.



*body (nose); noses; partial object complete with missing parts; truth; trustees; cacolydates; voodoo; haecceity; surrender; trust*

Process documentation for box object B.A.44. (plaster moulds taken from Barend de Wet, Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg).



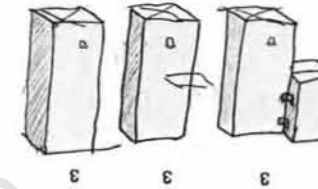
**body (skin); body (arm); wave; states of being (exteroceptive)**

(Above) self-administered tattoo (fore-arm) with white ink.



**blue; Krzysztof Kieslowski; states of being (myopic); states of being (definitely full definitely empty); accident; states of being (closed)**

(Immediately above) film-still from Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Blue* (the first one of three in the colours trilogy by Kieslowski) (1993). The scene pictured shows Julie (Juliette Binoche) attempting to block her ears and drown out a phrase of orchestral music that plays out repeatedly in her head (the music is contextualised until the closing scenes as the unfinished work of her late husband).



**trustees; box; erotic tendency; positions (scoundrel)**

(Left) sketched plan for three cardboard boxes with noses to house Douglas Gimberg, Barend de Wet, Christian Nerf and Anonymous.

Dear Douglas

One of these days we are going to have to have a long discussion about the Truth (whether it really is that which we are all so defiantly trying for, or whether it has simply become a conveniently impassable refuge for all that is vital). Though, having written that, it doesn't seem to be a problem at all – as much as the Truth, as a crack or a hole, simply has too much depth, it could also be all surface. And, as Professor Van Haute said, if there is a problem, then I don't have a problem with it.

I've decided not to include the stuff I've already written about the box. But I am inclined to say now that it should be a retreat for the Truth – where it would go to escape its usual trappings and indulge in its most perverse pleasures – a retreat in the middle of everything, where gold, shit and fool's gold all end up sharing the same bed (not necessarily by choice but because, as we know, the space is limited). In many ways having you make the box for me (getting it done as something I will just have to deal with) is a retreat and a trap.

As much as I like the idea of all of these ideas getting done in/strung up/straightened out (I do really want them to have a better life), I hate the idea of teaching them a lesson, or meting out tough love. But this is precisely why I need to put them in your more able hands and wash my own, it's a voluntary submission that entails a voluntary restraint, and they will survive me in any case.

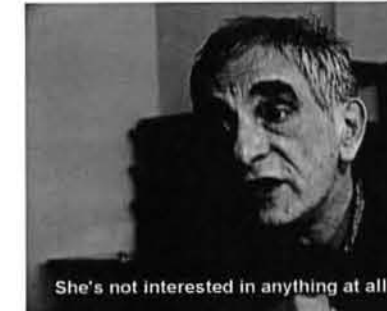
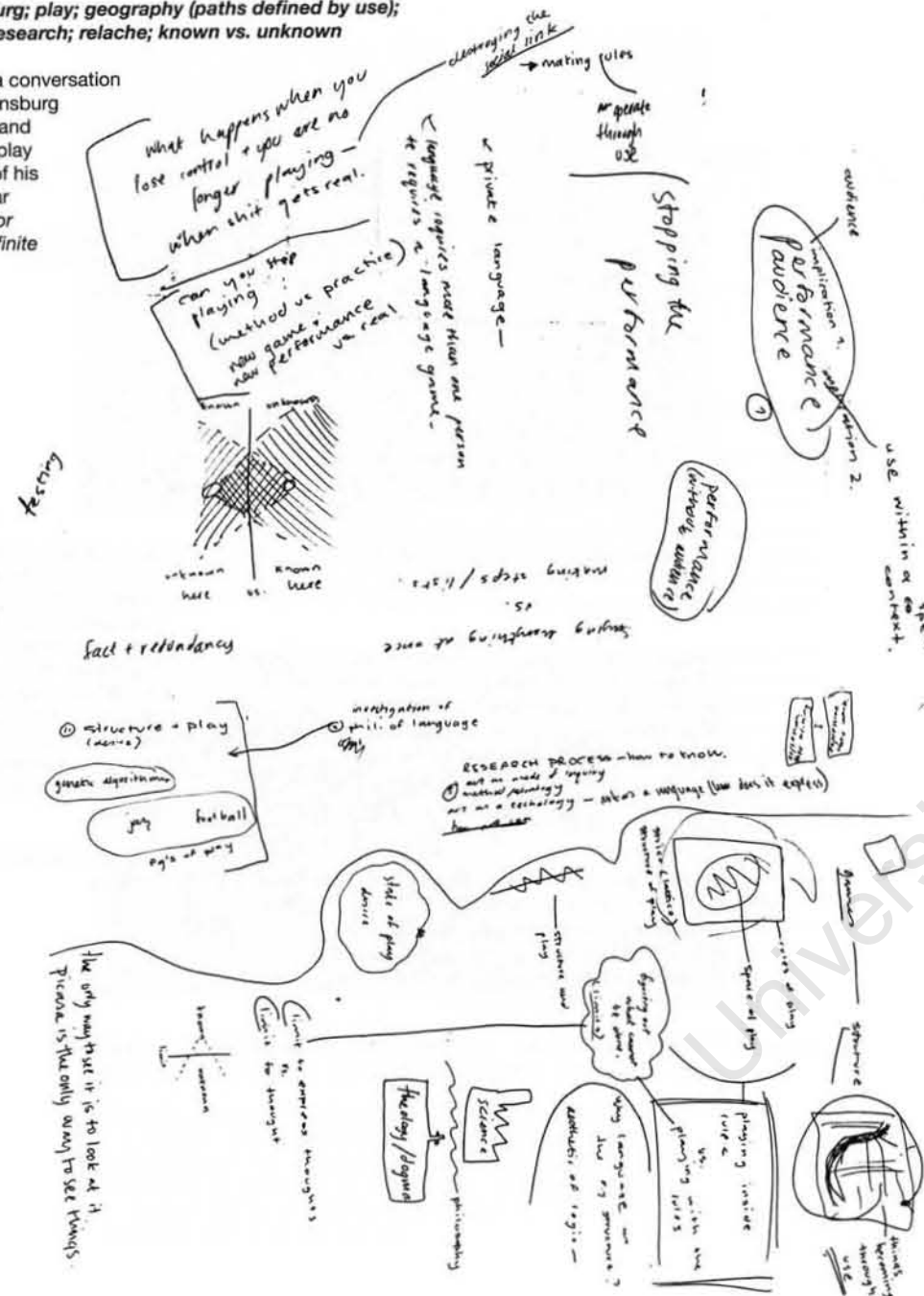
Francis.

**box; death; love; truth; gold; shit; fool's gold; architecture (trap); indulgence; a coffin for the child of our two year friendship; epiphany; crack; holes; surface; art as an exercise in problem solving; architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb); collaboration; exine**

(Left) letter to Douglas Gimberg.

Josh Ginsburg; play; geography (paths defined by use); language; research; relache; known vs. unknown

Notes from a conversation with Josh Ginsburg on the logic and structure of play in advance of his 2009 seminar (Strategies for searching infinite spaces) at Michaelis.



blue; Krzysztof Kieslowski; states of being (myopic); states of being (definitely full definitely empty); accident; states of being (closed); food (sugar)

(Above left) film stills from the director's commentary to Blue (Kieslowski 1993) showing Krzysztof Kieslowski discussing Julie's intense concentration on a sugar cube being lowered into a cup of coffee.

intensity; positions (ecstatic); lubrication; food (parsnips); Barend de Wet; Marquis de Sade; Marcel Duchamp; Georges Bataille; Pierre Pasolini; shit; body (genitals); body (acephalous); surface; perversion; throbbing gristle; masters vs. daddies; dead ends; a story without morals; ethics; looking for the crack; positions (acephalous)

(Below) notes for an indefinitely deferred chapter, initially planned to form a portion of my MFA thesis.

CHAPTER one (a chapter without nouns/a story without morals)

CONGLOMERATES

(Looking for the crack)

Extremes (Wanting intensity/wanting intensely)

Vokvoort (Barend de Wet "culture is war")

Getting closure: critical distance without a head (acephalous)

THROBBING GRISTLE

Bataille + acephale + materialism + Michael Hardt + pasolini ++ Jesus Christ (FATHER! MASTER! MY GOD! - the ecstasy of St. Theresa and sculptor Steiner)

Why we are scared of the surface (beautiful skin) + pressure

What I want vs. what I want to write about vs. what I want to make of it...

Hegel + master and slave (what the slave knew) (+ wanting to get fucked up; tender horror)

Shit: flowers + assholes

Vulgarity

(Duchamp + Bataille not dada because of their perversity ??)

(Why de Sade is so vulgar - unattractive - too romantic, too convinced of his anti-ethics, too reactionary?)

An attraction to pungency (Barend loving scars and blemishes)

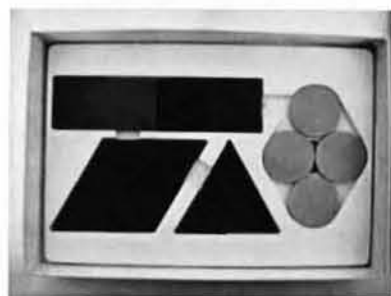
Adjectives without nouns

Parsnips + vaseline



**erotic tendency**

(Above) two black blocks.



**Early learning**

*early learning; something to do*

(Above) excerpted image with caption from Josh Ginsburg's 2009 seminar paper, presented as part of the MFA seminar program at Michaelis (Ginsburg 2009: 16).

the private joy of seeing the world

*joy; language (private); rotten nature; states of being (open); states of being (definitely full); erotic tendency; monstration*

(Immediately above) excerpted image from Josh Ginsburg's 2009 seminar paper, presented as part of the MFA seminar program at Michaelis (Ginsburg 2009: 14).



*old; truth;  
things that you  
pick up;  
positions (fool)*

(Left) struvite  
block (fool's  
gold).



*crack; something  
to do; things that  
are roundish;  
emollient;  
Anonymous*

(Immediately above)  
carved, chewed  
and cracked  
plywood with pencil.  
Collaboration with  
Anonymous.



*pip; hidden noise;  
epiphany; voice;  
excipient*

(Immediately  
above) apricot pip.



*things that pick you up;  
haecceity; say teacher teacher*

(Immediately below) loosened  
detail from a manhole cover or a  
part of a broken bolt.  
Received from Christian Nerf.



(top-left) B.B.80.1.  
(top-right) B.A.25.  
(middle-right) B.A.29.6.  
(bottom-left) B.A.29.5.



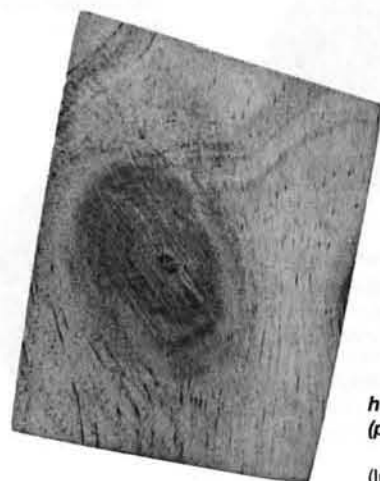
reasonable and unreasonable combinations;  
food (sugar); things that are round (spheroid);  
adulteration; conglomerate

(Above right) treacle sugar, poppy seeds and  
vaseline.



emollients; sediment

(Right) rotten plywood.  
Received from  
Christian Nerf.



hunger art; architecture  
(podium)

(Immediately above  
left) pine block



B.B.77.2. (top)  
B.A.14. (middle-right)  
B.B.77.5. (bottom).

explanation; leftovers; box; positions (centre); states of being (hyperceptive); states of being (coprophagous); Gustave Courbet; death; institutionalised bowel movements; something to believe in; honesty; positions (romantic); states of being (definitely full definitely empty); research; art; truth; ethics; desire; art; leftovers; forced choice; giving and receiving; states of being (dynamic); third; weak logic; holes; pornographic tendency; intersection points; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; Claire Parnet; common sense; indefensible vs. incredible; positions (valetudinarian); positions (institutionalised prisoner); theory vs. practice; abstraction; things that are round; body (excrement); masters vs. daddies; rotten nature; hobbling; architecture (trap); anxiety; fort-da

(Below and following pages) notes for an indefinitely deferred chapter, initially planned to form a portion of my MFA thesis.

### A note on what it is:

The contents of this box are the leftovers (things that have stood over; the things that I believe in) from a two and a half year process of chasing my own tail. It is a repository, the work of a bachelor. (*Modest/self-defeating to the point that it would seem discreditable, but it is not*).

**Leftovers:** It is now the one work, a rickety and homeless constellation with no ultimate point of convergence (it has been enough for me that some concentricity was achieved and that I was always in the centre) (Gustave Courbet greeting the sea on equal terms).

As a collection it may seem somewhat slight, it is (not because things that should be inside it have been removed or are missing, but because they were simply never made, "too much povera not enough arte" (Stern 2008: sp). *Chronically dry heaves (slow but spastic stutters)*).

But there is nothing out of place, nothing wrong or otherwise.

This is what it has been, a sincere attempt to develop a mode of practice that relieves one of the need for escape/ a sincere attempt at believing in the value of creative practice with the leap of a leap of faith but one that doesn't require a blindfold.

Closing the curtain: bowel movements and the institutionalized posture

**(You'll never have me).**

**Definitely full, definitely empty.**

Working with others is a fast track out of your mind and into...

How many times do I have to tell you? (Writing to be learnt by heart. *Have correct ideas!*)

Ennui vs /and/or + being in love with everything (*taking what you get*) – when that which was open becomes loose (*the importance of vigilant asceticism and honesty*).

Giving and receiving (*fort-da*)

Meaning and assumption – time + hesitation

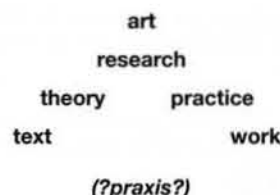
Truth (intersections, points of contact, nodal points, stars + holes)

Getting the words to work; a suggestion of how we should be attempting to write, if writing is expected to accompany practice/praxis (doing/being done in) (*praxis as a term, do we need it (what does it do that practice doesn't, means and means to an end – throwing out the bathwater with the baby)??*)



There are a series of problems that this procession of stubborn ideas seeks to address; the problem of writing as an act of creation, the problem of instructive/illustrative/direct description as a way of writing that cuts practice down to size (straightens it out, opens up its folds and shakes it out), the problem of institutionalization (and larger prison cells), commodification (a term which must be rethought away from domesticated institutionalized critiques; a commodity as a useful/valuable thing like water or time) and commercialism (the artist as entrepreneur, self-marketing factory). (the position of text within practice – how does one position the theory and the practice in order to put that which becomes within practice into theory and that which is in theory into practice – how to escape the quotidian/trite dilemma of theory vs. practice i.e. art as a practice + therefore valuable to theory etc.)

The problem of posing text (in relationship to work, practice to theory) in a position of explication/description – text/theory as something separable and either preceding or following the thing, the event of the work/practice.  
Text as practice/theory as practice/theory as work (all of these must work)



Practice as a special tool; abstraction; for eg: holes, things that are round (stones, organs).

The ... of language (not a problem)

(retaining the suspension; the thing that sits on the tip of your tongue, that seems so close + completely inaccessible; 'it's a ..., a ..., you know, the whatchamacallit thingimajig and the whatsit (degenerate words, for degenerate people whose ideas/motives are not present to them)

*"It is perhaps that information is a myth and that language is not essentially informative...language is not made to be believed but to be obeyed"* (Deleuze & Parnet 1977: 22). (As a schoolteacher dispenses order words, we write informatively) ... How do we proceed/process without informing; how do we practice so that our readers will learn us by heart, and believe us long after we are dead... ? (How do we get words to work?)

LOOKING FOR (vs. hunting, vs. finding) SOMETHING (finding for something).

Heidegger's HOLZWEGE (paths for the trees, not about getting from A to B).

*"Have correct ideas!"* (Deleuze & Parnet 1977: 23).

Positioning yourself in the centre.

*"It is first of all the image of good nature, good will – good will of the thinker who seeks the 'truth', good nature of thought which possesses 'the true' by right. Then, it is the image of a 'common sense' – harmony of all faculties of a thinking being. Then, again, it is the image of recognition – 'to recognize', doesn't this mean that something or someone is set up as a model of the activities of the thinker who make use of all his faculties on an object which is supposedly the same. Then again, it is the image of error – as if thought had only to mistrust external influences capable of making it take the 'false' as true. Finally it is the image of knowledge – as place of truth, and truth as sanctioning answers or solutions for questions and problems which are supposedly 'given'"* (Deleuze & Parnett 1977: 23-4).

Creators vs. authors – (how to avoid being an author) – *"you only found authors in those who had not waited for you in order to stop being authors (neither Spinoza nor Nietzsche were 'authors': they escape from it, the one by the power of a geometrical method, the other by aphorisms which are the opposite of an authors maxims; even Proust escapes, by the game of the narrator; and Foucault..."* (Deleuze & Parnet 1977: 25).

BELIEVING (faith) + making things up (creations do not necessarily have to be new; novelty vs. invention)  
Collecting things that are round and hard (rocks)/growing lumps/nameless depressions.  
Evasion; expectation; will (masters vs. daddies)  
lowering expectations  
(I am not one of yours)  
Desire + substitution:  
Energy + anxiety + drive ----- directions (cache's, units, storage spaces)  
Alienation  
Hobbling (good or terrible)

*"Guattari would later proclaim that psychoanalysis is "the best capitalist drug because in it desire is confined to a couch: desire, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, is an energy that is contained rather than one that, if freed, could militantly engage itself in something different"* (Wikipedia 2008: sv. 'Felix Guattari')

Forced choice:

*Will you take the left or the right half? Back or front? Top or bottom?*

*The problem of forced choice is no longer a problem; (the problem of opposites being binary is not a problem – choosing/trying on the opposite when the one no longer works – since everyone knows now that opposites are not opposite at all.*

(Conversations vs. interviews)

You were looking for answers, I asked.

I feel as though I might die, what composition of proteins or hormones would the tears of dying have (Nina Liebenberg's investigation on tears)

*Finding something worth sharing:* (bringing things forward – truth)

depressions:



(things that bring you down....)

WE ARE NOT GOING TO LOOK AT BIG IDEAS LIKE HAPPINESS ETC.

(We are not going to ask big questions of great texts)

Are we, should we be inclined towards fundamental questions?

Sadness (and its relation to jouissance) (ennui?)

The things that I make will not always be attractive, or presented as things that are attractive – some of them will be dull, obtuse, shapeless depressions, some of them will be holes.

Being directed:

(finding what you are looking for vs. taking what you get)

Musk. Ambrosia. (Heady)

Articulating points of contact (Josh's coupling machine, my ... on your ...)

Open mouths:

Swollen tongues

rasping phlegm rattling in my trachea and up into my throat – I'll pass this on, spit into my mouth, flush out my orifices, suck up my lips, clench my jaws. Too vast, hollow, cavernous – too deep, too loose – shudders, slaps, grinds, forces, drains – it is exhausted. That shudder, the last extension, a last gasp slow exit, face burnt with blood, scrunched up, slip out and I leave with everything it gave to me, its labours worth lost amongst the overflow, congealed and persistent, out involuntarily – expelled a few minutes later.

heavy, tired, hopeless - swollen, raw

Parents sucking phlegm out of their children's noses (its not an idea I am attracted to, but I am repelled enough to know that it has a kind of pungency).

HOLES (that are not for filling in but for sitting inside, big enough to stand up in, holes that are dug for looking into and others that are dug for looking, slipping, squeezing through (loopholes). Holes for putting your things in (spare parts, storage spaces). Holes that contract once you are inside. Holes that are uncomfortable/too comfortable.

*There are different tactics/strategies of approach: within an experimental space (rather than hypothetical), when one stays within a collapsible/precious/lifting structure, things can be thrown out either way and retrieved all the same (choosing/trying on the opposite when the one no longer works) but not without care, each move (each experiment) is a risk since there are no controls. (When sitting in underground structures that are loosely constructed we should not expect that they won't cave in, subsume us, we should be prepared (if we decide to go under) to become subterranean, if only until our next saviour/s arrive).*

**OBLIQUE SPHERES/OBSTUSE SPHERES (ORGANS, MAMMARIES)**

swollen, hollow, hard.

Levi-strauss – the raw and the cooked, the bricoleur and the engineer.

**INTENTIONALITY** (jouissance as opaque) + directives + will

charlatans – quacks: Reich, Lacan. (Daddies vs. masters – the one's that you wouldn't ask for a reference letter.)

Von Trier + Dogme 95 – dressage (playing by the rules/hobbling)

DADADADADADADADADADADADADA.

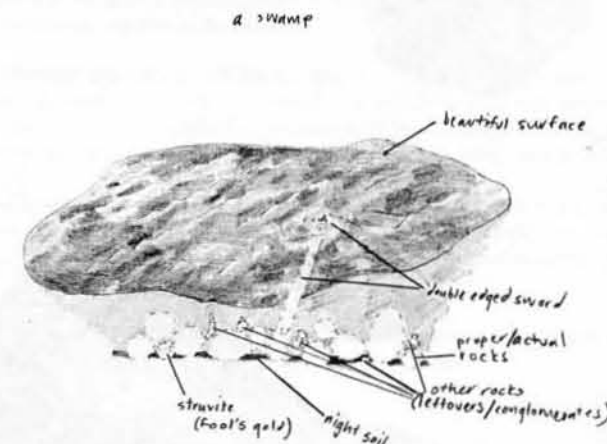
## night soil

noun

human excrement collected at night from buckets, cesspools, and outhouses and sometimes used as manure.

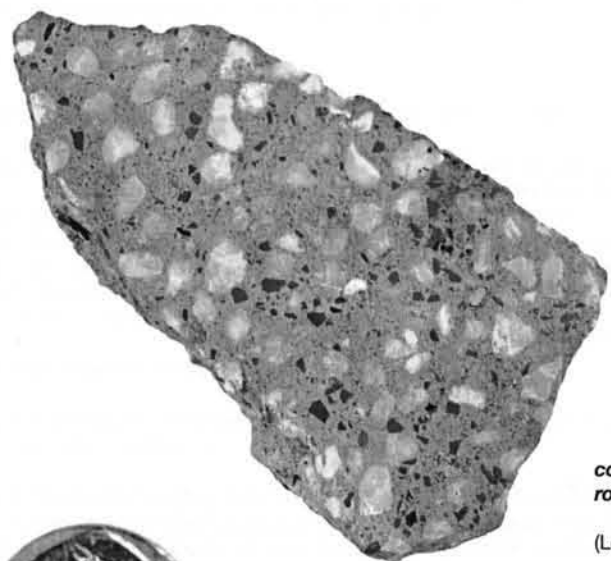
### night soil; body (excrement); explanation

(Above) definition of night soil (SACOD 2002: Sv. 'night soil')



night soil; geography (swamp); tomography; rocks; surface; fool's gold; gold; double-edged sword; sediment; leftovers; conglomerate; productive confusion

(Immediately above) diagram showing art as a swamp.



**conglomerate (superficial);  
rocks; assemblage; sediment**

(Left) faux granite and concrete.



**conglomerate; states of being  
(myopic); rocks**

(Right) rock (cape granite)  
from Camps Bay beach  
(Western Cape).



**B.A.45. (top)  
B.A.60. (bottom)**

Dear Bili

*I am attempting to find ways to share what has become an impossibly esoteric project (I am currently working towards a masters of fine art and they want to know everything). There were intersection points between what I am trying to write about/make something of and some of the things you said in your talk at the SA National Gallery. So I wanted to follow them around a bit.*

*The one thing, in particular, was about painting as a dead language – the observation, yours, was that we can speak dead languages, like painting, but not without an acute awareness of speaking it/having spoken it. It brings up a sense of acknowledging the surface, the material, the skin. Until very recently, I have only found an articulation of such a thing within philosophy that deals quite specifically with language as the one object of study (deconstruction, lacanian psychoanalysis and the like). I am still not sure where this hypothetical investigation is going, but there is a gap here, to get beyond the signifier and into the thing (the suspended signifier).*

*Besides the obvious differences of intent (speaking/seeing), there is a difference in style between attempts to emphasize the performance of form/material, of a surface, when speaking/mark making, and other, more reasonable interrogations that show how meaning is made after the fact. The performance of the surface happens in the middle of everything – it cannot be read without being seen (it shows).*

*This is all more along my own lines – part of my attempt to allow others to see that which is hidden from their view or sometimes blocked by their resistance to reading (and/or listening to) a dead language (what was quite a practical observation on painting – something that can no longer simply speak, but must be seen as a restrained expression, full of holes).*

*Another thing, was the idea of writing as a form of making marks, and sentences as found objects. Your show at the Goodman seemed to be a beginning/becoming of these ideas...*

**Bili Bidjocka; dead language; language (as a surface); suspended  
signifier; Fernando Pessoa; Bernado Soares; middle**

Unsent email to Bili Bidjocka after a lecture by the artist on his work (facilitated by the Goodman Gallery, during Bidjocka's exhibition in Cape Town, *Fiction I: The Autobiography without Form of Bernado Soares*, 17 September - 10 October 2009). (Bernado Soares was one of the heteronyms assumed by the Portuguese author Fernando Pessoa).

*stones; mauve; things that are  
round (spheroid); body (calculus);  
lousy little pebble*

(Immediately below) stone.

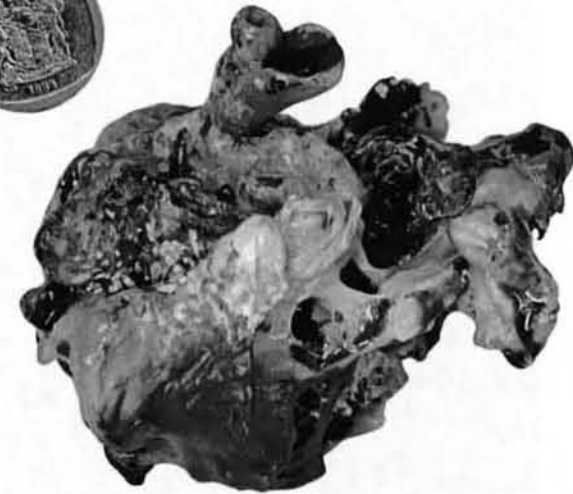


*rotten nature; food (apple);  
superstition; truth; tomography;  
crack*

(Right) apple core. Received from  
Christian Nerf.



**B.A.63. (top)**  
**B.B.94.1. (bottom)**



*lousy little pebble;  
body (genitals); conglomerate*

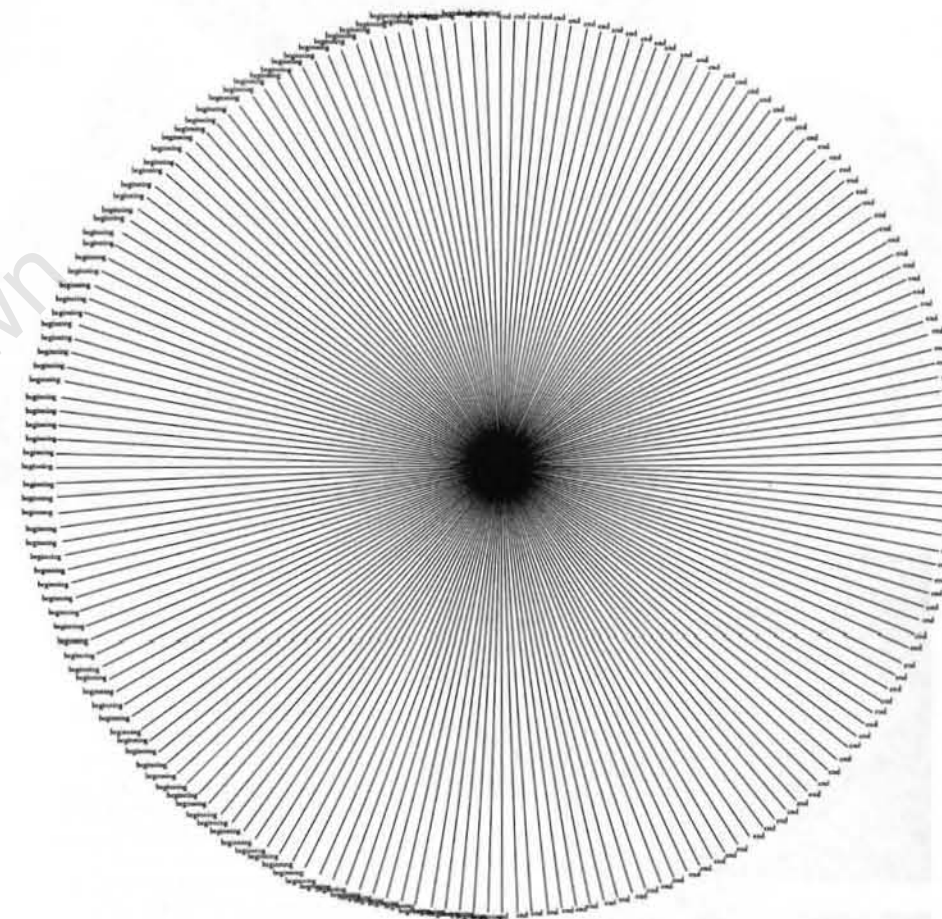
Liquid plastic, sawdust and  
enamel.

**B.B.83.**



*conglomerate (superficial); geography (garden)*

Oil and enamel on board.



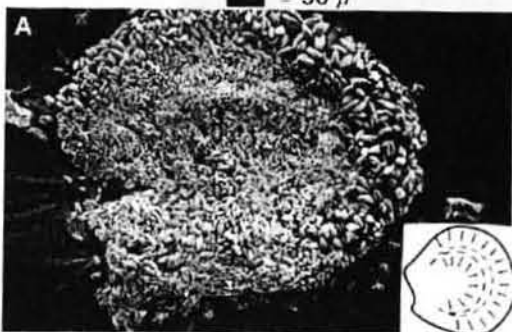
*positions; intersection points; middle; monstration; line*

Diagram showing the interaction between the beginning the middle and the end.



*body (genitals);  
flowers;  
rotten nature;  
double-vision*

(Right) detail of a  
digital photograph of  
an orchid.



*body (ear); body (calculus);  
stones; otoliths; balance;  
states of being (interoceptive);  
direction; infra-mince*

(Left) Magnified image from an  
unknown source showing the tiny  
calcareous stones (otoliths) that  
lie on a membrane and a bed of  
hair cells within the human ear.  
Functioning primarily to orient their  
host and provide a perception  
of balance, otoliths are present  
in varying sizes and degrees of  
sophistication in all vertebrates.



*things that are round (spheroid);  
emollient; conglomerate (dot);  
stones*

(Above left) stone.

*things that are round (spheroid);  
emollient; conglomerate (line);  
stones*

(Above right) stone.

(left) B.A.41.  
(right) B.A.40.

**Marcel Duchamp; Pierre Cabanne; box; architecture (cockpit); aerial view; space-time (smooth); positions (ecstatic)**

Excerpt from an interview between Marcel Duchamp and Pierre Cabanne (Cabanne 1971: 42-72).

C: It's a sum of experiments?

D: A sum of experiments, yes...

D: For the "Box" of 1913-1914, it's different. I didn't have the idea of a box as much as just notes. I thought I could collect, in an album like the Saint-Etienne catalogue, some calculations, some reflexions, without relating them. Sometimes they're on torn pieces of paper ... I wanted that album to go with the "Glass," and to be consulted when seeing the "Glass" because, as I see it, it must not be "looked at" in the aesthetic sense of the word. One must consult the book, and see the two together. The conjunction of the two things entirely removes the retinal aspect that I don't like. It was very logical.

C: Where does your antiretinal attitude come from?

...

C: When you were young, didn't you ever experience the desire to be artistically cultured?

D: Maybe, but it was a very mediocre desire. I would have wanted to work, but deep down I'm a mously lazy. I like living, breathing, better than working. I don't think that the work I've done have any social importance whatsoever in the future. Therefore, if you wish, my art would living: each second, each breath is a work which is inscribed nowhere, which is neither cerebral. It's a sort of constant euphoria.

C: That's what Roché said. Your best work has been the use of your time.

D: That's right. I think that's really right.

Duchamp and Cabanne in Cabanne (1971: 42-72)

**reasonable and unreasonable combinations; emollient**

(Right) eucalyptus seed pod with plaster. Assembled by Christian Nerf.



**seed; haecceity**

(Immediately below) upper shell of an acorn



**knots; unbecoming; space-time (smooth)**

(Left) twisted branch broken from a *Rhus Pendulina* (Wit Karee) in Glenvista (Gauteng). Received from Ryan van Huyssteen.



**(top) B.A.6.  
(middle-right) B.A.29.3.  
(bottom-left) B.A.16.**



*kelp; things that are round  
(swollen); rotten nature; body  
(genitals); knife-holder; excipient*

(Immediately below) African  
Blackwood with liquid plastic inlay.



*knife-holder; direction*

African Blackwood shape  
Received from Douglas Gimberg.



B.A.65. (top)  
B.A.66.1. (bottom)

*unit; space-time (striated);  
something to do*

(Right) cardboard and  
adhesive plastic wood veneer.



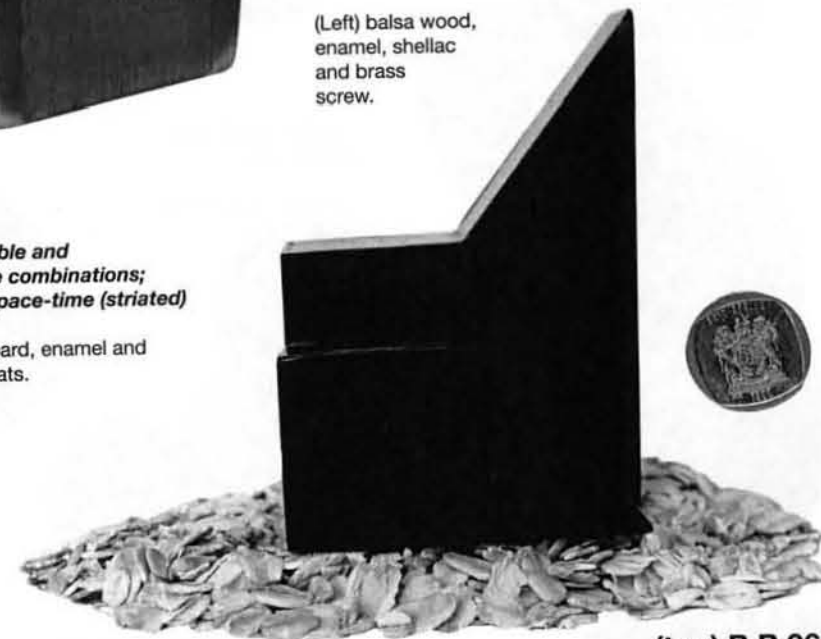
*unit; architecture (exedra);  
space-time (striated)*

(Left) balsa wood,  
enamel, shellac  
and brass  
screw.



*unit; reasonable and  
unreasonable combinations;  
food (oats); space-time (striated)*

(Right) cardboard, enamel and  
shellac with oats.



(top) B.B.96.  
(middle-left) B.B.81.  
(bottom-right) B.B.87.

08,  
2009

*experiment; body (excrement)*

(Right) tinted liquid plastic and plaster.

*throbbing gristle; stones; body (excrescence)*

(Immediately above right) liquid plastic, oil paint and plasticine.

*stones; body (calculus); conglomerate*

(Immediately above left) sawdust and liquid plastic.

*hunger art*

(Right) liquid plastic off-cuts with plaster.

B.A.42.4. (top-left)  
B.A.34. (top-right)  
B.A.39. (bottom-left)  
B.A.1.1.-1.3. (bottom-right)

174

*things that pick you up; sediment; holes*

(Immediately below) piece of mirror and steel plate with soldered hole.  
Mirror received from Christian Nerf.

*body (skin); holes; assemblage*

(Right) plywood block with hardened contact adhesive.

*magic; communication*

Plastic earring. Received from Christian Nerf.

*lousy little pebble; things that are round (spheroid); red*

(Immediately left) liquid plastic and enamel.

(top-left) B.A.62.  
(top-right) B.A.63.  
(middle-right) B.A.22.1.  
(bottom-left) B.B.74.2.

175

*blue; things that are round  
(sphere); food (banana)*

Dried banana, liquid plastic ball  
and enamel.



*knife-holder; truth; restraint; body (fingers); Gimberg Nerf*

(Object B.A.66.2. not pictured) restraining device fitted  
over index and middle fingers (forcing them to cross)  
made by Gimberg Nerf as part of an ongoing project  
(*truth well told*, 2009- ).

**B.A.37. (top)**

**B.A.66.2. (bottom, not pictured)**

*something to do; unit; play;  
architecture (trap)*

(Immediately right) polished African  
blackwood puzzle.

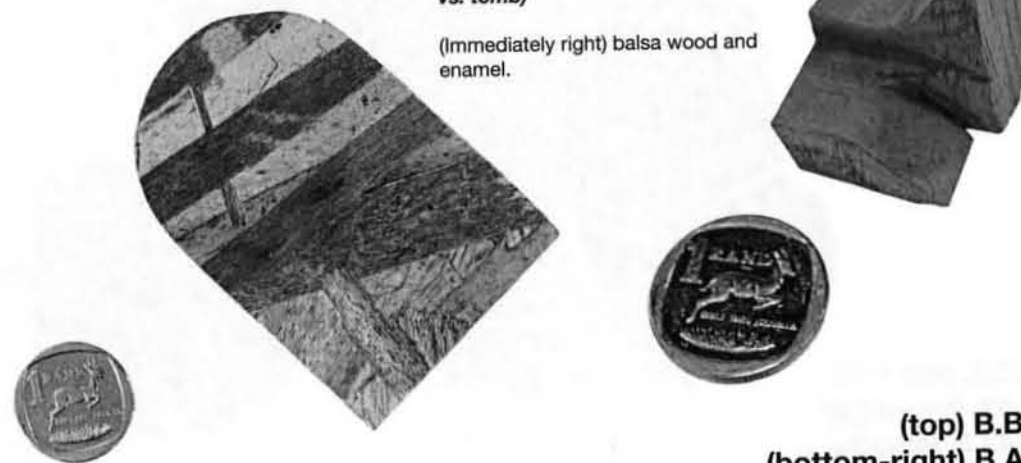


*oneiric house; architecture  
(door); conglomerate (wood)*

(Immediately below) chipboard  
offcut. Received from Douglas  
Gimberg.

*unit; something to do; craft;  
architecture (house vs. temple  
vs. tomb)*

(Immediately right) balsa wood and  
enamel.



**(top) B.B.79.**  
**(bottom-right) B.A.30.**  
**(bottom-left) B.A.53.**



stones; body (blood);  
body (calculus)

(Right) sanded plaster,  
blood and shellac.

rocks; body (appendage);  
rotten nature

(Left) rock.

stones;  
things that are round  
(spheroid)

(Immediately right)  
tinted liquid plastic  
and plaster.

emollient; things that are round  
(circle); lousy little pebble;  
stones

(Immediately below) stone.

emollient;  
conglomerate;  
things that are  
roundish

(Immediately above left)  
chipped off  
piece of brick.

B.A.2.2. (top-left)  
B.A.63. (top-right)  
B.A.42.5. (middle)  
B.A.42.2. (bottom-right)  
B.A.42.3. (bottom left)

rotten nature; things that are  
round (swollen); food (apple);  
conglomerate (superficial)

(Immediately below) liquid plas-  
tic cast from rotting apple with  
enamel.

stones; emollient; things that  
are roundish

(Immediately below) rounded  
piece of clay tile or brick.  
Received from Christian Nerf.

rotten nature; things that are  
round (swollen); food (apple)

(Immediately above right) liquid  
plastic cast from rotting apple.

(top-left) B.A.51.  
(top-right) B.A.64.3.  
(bottom-right) B.A.50.



**wave**

Photograph by Mila Zinkova showing 'billow clouds' or 'van Gogh' clouds in San Francisco. The clouds, sometimes called 'van Gogh' clouds, form as a result of the sudden juxtaposition of air at different velocities.



**nut; magic; elucubration**

Almond gnawed overnight by resident cockroaches in Michaelis studio.



**body (calculus); kidney stones; stones; things that are roundish; animals (ox)**

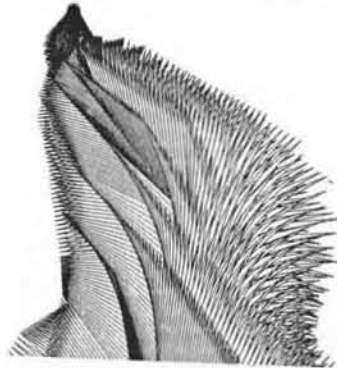
Kidney stones from an ox.  
Received from Fritha Langerman.



(top) B.A.29.2.  
(bottom) B.B.75.

pedagogy; third; collaboration; curriculum; dead heat; Christian Nerf; hobbling; architecture (trap); play; collaboration; animals (horse); line; direction; superstition; Bettina Malcomess; Dorothee Kreuzefeld; Gilles Deleuze

(Below and following pages) booklet produced in collaboration with Christian Nerf for *Chimurenga* no. 15, 'The Curriculum is Everything (for comrades who ask 'What is to be Done?')' (Nerf & Burger 2010: 268-271). Additional keywords are listed sporadically underneath illustrated page spreads.



## 2. Say Teacher Teacher

### ROUND 1. Beginnings and endings.

"You start, I'll finish."  
"No you start, and I'll finish."

If the curriculum is a racecourse and the extra curricular traps it up, digs into it and leaves it pitted and potholed (full of obstacles that don't quite fit / fit too tightly) then we could forget about trying to win, or lose. We could run, sometimes faster, sometimes slower, and we could smell our own dead heat. The effect of it would be similar to a kind of hobbling – a lame limp that exposes how one is shorter, weaker, than the other – what would it mean to be hobbled together (as a collective)?



(In terms of collaboration, where there are two firsts and then a third, how is it possible to recognise the third when it appears? What does it look like? Why is there no second?)

No seconds or thirds, all first – recollecting what was good about the first one hundred or so laps and heading straight forward into the future (staying on track).

There is of course always the possibility that sharing a path/route/lap (a predetermined distance without an end) would

lead the now soiled curriculum to become something extraordinary. Would having your face buried in the gap lead you to forget that you are stuck on a circular track?

Do you forget about the need to escape or do you no longer need to (because you're better at drawing circles, digging holes and sitting in traps)?

If you spend time understanding the rules, when you yourself have drawn the lines, you don't try and cheat yourself out of a dignified win.

...[]...

[...]

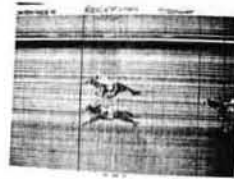
...

[]

...find a hole that is empty enough to expose something of the truth but one that is also big enough to stand up in...

"I felt I could perceive unknown territories where strange concepts dwell" (Gilles Deleuze in a letter to Kuniichi Uno on his collaboration with Félix Guattari, from *Two regimes of madness: texts and interviews* 1975-1995, 2006, p. 240.)

[...] we intend to use it (assumption) as a tool. Embrace the wrong (?) direction before we think too hard about what is deemed right (or wrong). Are these moments of recognition or ill-conceived assumptions?



Dead heat. (Promotional image from *Deadheat*, Dorothee Kreuzefeld and Bettina Malcomess, 2009.)

(What happens when we overtake each other)

### ROUND 2.3. Loose ends (Leftovers)

2.1.16. Learn and/or believe that what you have learnt is true.

Knowledge/information as superstition – remnants of previous teachings that somehow stick, filter through – things that you 'just know' (superstition as an honest way of describing facts).

What good is being right?

"Superstition, as commonly understood, is the cult of a false god. In the correct sense, it is reconstructed in etymology as superstare, what is held above. In the figurative sense, it is what survives, what remains, what continues to exist after its progenitors have ceased to be, it is something that describes what survives." (Jacques-Alain Miller, *Lacan's later teaching*, 2003, p.1)



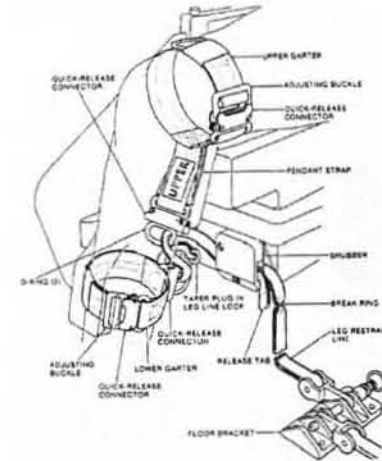
### 2.3.1. Climbing on top

Saturation points (ecstasy)  
Total adoration

### 2.1.17. Sign me up

#### Forced participation

Doing stuff you don't want to do but the other makes it apparent that you need to.



#### Shared paths

Working together offers unpredictability. Fuck know thyself. How about knowing thyself is easy now relinquish yourself and merge with the other [a nicer, but no less dirty, word is collaborate]. Each path has a predetermined distance but not an end.



master

teacher

slave

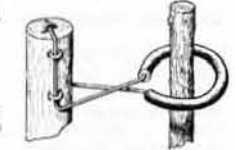
Prevention of free will = subscription (agreeing to go under)

Directives (setting ourselves straight)

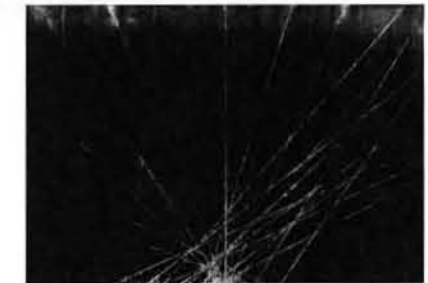
Experiments + experience: experiments without controls (rendering their results technically useless but enforcing a different level of awareness...?).

#### Hobbling

I was in discussion with a friend who had woken up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. After some shop talk and a few laughs I drew a link to our agreement to occasionally work on assumption; to not see assumption as the mother? I like the way we will have to negotiate that section of the course as we are hobbled, we limp through knowing we have started this round disadvantaged. Our off-days may be our best; these should be seen as the days that the third party takes over and then even the firsts take a step back and join the unneeded.



"... It is when you come across a single word at the intersection of three ideas that you notice that the important thing is that word and not something else – it is when you have found the word that concentrates around it the greatest number of threads in the mycelium that you know it is the hidden centre of the gravity of the desire in question. That, in a word, is the point I was talking about: the nodal point where discourse forms a hole." Jacques Lacan, *My teaching*, (2008, p28.)



Michael Taylor. Vegas. 2009. Folded & agitated photocopy. 297 x 420mm.

otoliths; intersection points; masters vs. teachers vs. slaves; restraint; holes; positions (ecstatic); Jacques Lacan; Jacques-Alain Miller

The clause of things being equal (equal sharing) requires cooperation from both parties – a combination of subscription and ? (is subscription within set limits – 'we will only go so far' – still subscription? An empowered subscription?)

"... and what about experience, you say? The whole point is that experience is constituted as such only if we start out by asking the right question. We call that a hypothesis. Why a hypothesis? A hypothesis is simply a question that has been asked in the right way..." (Lacan, my teaching, p 72)



Jacques Coetzer. Sketch for Inverted Rostrum. 2007. Performance

(racecourse – the metaphor is great because it almost perfectly sums up everything wrong with the idea of a set curriculum – no escape routes (little flexibility) competition, running in circles (repeating things) ... etc etc) there are other aspects that are fitting (once you are in it, you start running – what you said, no turning back)

2.1.15. Ready yourself to give birth to some new-fangled thing and nurture it to a point that it rejects you.

>> another thing to consider – the repercussions of cheating as a way to bend/break rules <<

#### Air tight

Unspoken agreements, enunciation, utterances.

Visible, invisible. Elucidation.

Voice + eyes

[...] a voice that speaks, not mumbling, not muttering, it continues to speak beyond the possibilities of performance...

A loose combination of notes, observations, touching points, suggestions for a way forward (including an insight into what kind of syllabus is applied).



#### ROUND 2.1. Examples and considerations:

2.1.1. Consider what is too good to be true and why.

2.1.2. Be prepared [a frame of mind] to commit random acts.

2.1.3. Hobble along and/or Fast forward (no average pace)

2.1.4. Change something for the worse. E.g. Plant Sculptures/ sculpting with plants. Once you are doing it you will see/learn how there is beauty in everything, and being attracted to the pungency of beauty is not dissimilar to ugly.

2.1.5. Abnormal. Wear something unsuitable (unsuitable/out of character for one vs. uncharacteristic of the situation). E.g. business gear on Saturdays



2.1.6. Get paid for doing something that you would be doing anyway. Doing something for/with the other.

2.1.7. Engage in an act (peel an apple) in a series of places/spaces. Your home/studio/public venue

(How it would feel to peel an apple on a desert island with only round stones and no sand: you would sit in the sun and listen to the sound of the small crustaceans moving in and around the piles of rotting kelp – it would smell like life and death. You would take out a knife and start cutting into the skin somewhere near the top, then slowly spiral it down. The rocks would be cold and the sun would be warmer. You would have an image of yourself from above, so engrossed in the act, submerged by the stones and the waves and the smell – it would occur to you to spill yourself into your surroundings and you would drop the peels into the sea at your feet.)



2.1.8. Perform and interpret controlled experiments without any controls.

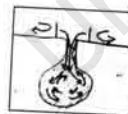
2.1.9. Raise funds Interview Kate Bush – face to face – something good – Wilhelm Reich / Sigmund Freud

2.1.10. Become habitual

2.1.11. Become something (else) (occasionally)

2.1.12. Make decisions in a weak frame of mind and deal with it (see it) once one is 'straight'.

[...] the repercussions of constructing things that are flexible, loose, supple? (Where lines are drawn so that we have things to bend.) Logically speaking, these structures are weak.

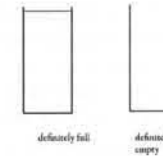


"A weaker logic is not less interesting than a stronger logic, in fact it is much more interesting, because it is much more difficult to make it stick... but it holds up all the same."

(Jacques Lacan, My teaching, 2008, p.32)

2.1.13. Never presume that you have spoken with the author/always presume that you have spoken with the author.

2.1.14. Find ways of getting people to expect less from you, and expect more from everyone else.



2.1.15. Elucidate. Work in the dark (by candlelight).

#### ROUND 2.2. Extra curriculum as curriculum

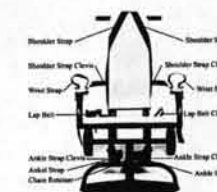


(a never-ending course vs. a course that prepares one for future tasks).

Start (not by gorging yourself on knowledge) but by razing ground (editing / deleting old / useless information, preconceived notions and bullshit.)

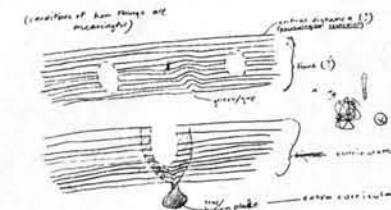
"Of all writings I love only that which is written with blood. Write with blood: and you will experience that blood is spirit. It is not an easy thing to understand unfamiliar blood: I hate the reading idler. He who writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read, he wants to be learned by heart..." (Douglas Gimberg, 1989.) (superstition)(?)

The idea that there is such a thing as a curriculum that encompasses and accounts for everything is feasible when you are in a position such as ours – where there is a will.

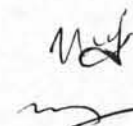


We accept that the curriculum could be everything, and that we will subscribe to things in an acknowledgement of our missing pieces (in order to receive, we will ask again to be taught a lesson). Not to fill gaps, but to dig into them, force them open, dwell in them for longer than is necessary – feeding on that particular kind of disquiet that comes from being hidden.

What we are really interested in is the extra curricular, more so because we know that such activities are not really external, otherwise, or damaging to the structure of the whole (that much is obvious). When it begins to burrow into what is already going on, the extra curricular ceases to be a voluntary supplement, something kept neatly on the side of the rest.



We stop calling it the extra curricular, and the structure of the whole begins to bend, life becomes a more accommodating phenomenon – we have an understanding.



states of being (definitely full definitely empty); extra-curricular; Douglas Gimberg; Friedrich Nietzsche; writing in blood; a time for comprehending; elucidation



*accident; magic; rocks; crack;  
repetition*

(Left) spilt rock and liquid plastic  
replica with poster paint.

*stones; things that are round  
(swollen); body (cyst); Castle  
Rock; geography (sea)*

(Right) liquid plastic cast of a stone  
from Castle Rock (Western Cape).



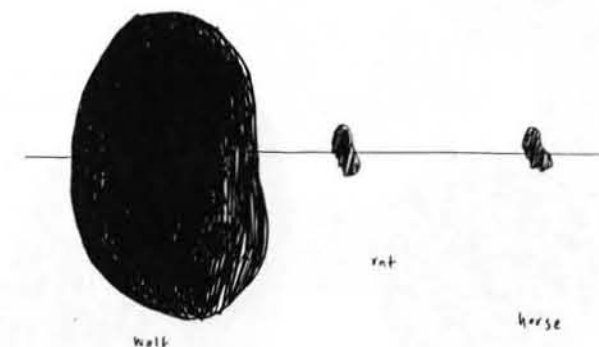
B.A.52. (top)  
B.A.57. (bottom)

Here, the father and the professor do not pull their punches. No scruples. Once again the horse must represent something else. And this something else is limited: first it is the mother, then the father, and then the phallus. (Not to worry, no matter what animal is under consideration, the Freudians' response will always be the same: horse or giraffe, rooster or elephant, it's always papa). Freud states it plainly: the horse by itself is of no importance; it is purely incidental.... "A child seeing a horse fall under the whip and struggling back up with clattering hooves and sparks has no affective importance! Instead of seeing intensive affects and a machinic assemblage in the horse's determinations, such that the horse in the road distinguishes itself from any other animal and even other types of horses, Freud sings his refrain: look here, what the horse has near its eyes are papa's spectacles; what it has around its mouth is papa's mustache! It is astonishing. What is a child to do

against so much bad faith? Instead of seeing in the horse's determinations a circulation of intensities in a machinic arrangement, Freud proceeds through static analogies of representations, identifying the analogs: it is no longer the horse making perfect droppings with its massive rear (degree of power), but the horse itself is a dropping, and the door through which it comes out is a rear end! Instead of having the pee-maker and biting in a kind of intensive relationship in the horse, suddenly the pee-maker bites! Here, Hans gives a start, a way of saying that his father really has not understood a thing: "But a pee-maker does not bite." (Children are reasonable; they know that pee-makers do not bite, no more than pinky fingers speak). The father's shameful response: "Perhaps it does nonetheless ..." Who is sick? Little Hans? Or his father and the "professor" together? Ravaged by *interpretosis* and meaning. Nasty. Pity the children.

*Gilles Deleuze; Sigmund Freud; Little Hans; animals (horse); body (genitals); utterances; pedagogy; it is what it says it is*

(Above) excerpt from Gilles Deleuze (2006: 96) on the inability of the analyst or interpreter to comprehend an utterance (that which is what it says it is).



*animals (rat); animals (wolf); animals (horse); things that are roundish*

(Immediately above) diagram of a wolf, a rat and a horse.



**Lazlo Moholy-Nagy; Hans Haacke; things that are round; loopholes; abstraction; adulteration; indulgence; Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; superstition; holes; Samuel Beckett; shit; repetition; states of being (definitely full); levitation; sunlight; flowers**

Note with quotations from the Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED 2009: Sv 'loophole', Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 2) and Beckett (1958: 16)). Illustrations show own image of internal eye structure, *Moholy-Nagy levitating a chisel* (as reproduced in *Vision in Motion*, 1947) as illustrated on [www.orbit.zkm.de](http://www.orbit.zkm.de) (2009: sp) and Hans Haacke's *Sphere in oblique air-jet* (1967) as illustrated on [www.ekac.org](http://www.ekac.org) (2006: sp).

stones; emollient;  
knife-holder

(Right) stone.



conglomerate (bulgy); emollient;  
things that pick you up; things  
that are roundish

(Above) concrete and gravel  
conglomerate from Sea Point  
(Western Cape).

emollient; things that are round  
(spheroid); conglomerate (line);  
Silwerstroomstrand; stones

(Immediately below) stone from  
Silwerstroomstrand (Western  
Cape).



stones; emollient; things  
that are round (circle);  
conglomerate (line);  
Silwerstroomstrand

(Immediately right) stone  
from Silwerstroomstrand  
(Western Cape).



B.A.46. (top-left)  
B.A.59. (top-right)  
B.A.43.1. (bottom-left)  
B.A.43.2. (bottom-right)

Flowers (holes)<sup>1</sup>

The pleasure of the sunlight – dry heat

(warm and agitated surfaces)

Things that have been left sitting in the sun, slowly  
suffering the action of heat (things that have been spoilt,  
left in a state of fermentation)

– slowly.

Musk. Ambrosia.

Articulated points of contact.

Open mouths:

Holes that are not for filling but for sitting in, big enough  
to stand up in, holes that are dug for looking in, and others

<sup>1</sup> Something else;

'Loophole'. Fig. An outlet or means of escape. Often  
applied to an ambiguity or omission in a statute, etc.,  
which affords opportunity for evading its intention.

OED Online. Sv. *Loophole*

[Perh. after Du. loopgat, in which the first element is the  
stem of loopen to run.]

Loop-hole. 1663-4 MARVELL Corr. Wks. 1872-5 II. 143  
It would be much below You and Me...to have such loop-  
holes in Our souls, and to squeeze Our selves through our  
own words. Marvell, Andrew. Correspondence 1653-78  
(Grosart II)

that are dug for looking through, slipping, squeezing  
through (loopholes).

(Traps/holes that are constructed by loosely drawn lines,  
lines that are put in place in order to be bent/stretched)

5.1. Things that are round and hard:

Things that have the appearance of being full, but that  
have the possibility of being hollow.

Conves, swollen but without the threat of  
bursting/popping/spilling, self contained,

Moulded somehow, smoothed over – through a process of  
persistent abrasions or brushings.

5.2. Things that are round and soft:

Organs (mammaries).

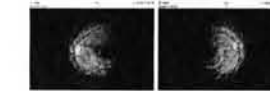
Deleuze & Guattari *Anti Oedipus* p. 2:

(On Lenz) "While taking a stroll outdoors, on the other  
hand, he is in the mountains, amid falling snowflakes, with  
other gods or without any gods at all, without a family,  
without a father or a mother, with nature. "What does my  
father want? Can he offer me more than that? Impossible.  
Leave me in peace." Everything is a machine. Celestial  
machines, the stars or rainbows in the sky, alpine machines  
– all of them connected to those of his body. The continual  
whirl of machines. "He thought that it must be a feeling of  
endless bliss to be in contact with the profound life of  
every form, to have a soul for rocks, metals, water, and  
plants, to take into himself, as in a dream, every element of  
nature, like flowers that breathe with the waning and  
waning of the moon."

"He does not live nature as nature, but as a process of  
production"

Beckett, *Molloy* p. 16.

"This should all be written in the pluperfect. What a rest to  
speak of bicycles and horns. Unfortunately it is not of  
them I have to speak, but of her who brought me into the  
world, through the hole in her ear if my memory is  
correct. First taste of the shit. ... But before I leave this  
earthly paradise, suspended between the mountains and the  
sea, sheltered from certain winds and exposed to all that  
Auster vents, in the way of accents and languors, on this  
accursed country, it would ill become me not to mention  
the awful cries of the corncreaks that run into the corn, all  
the short summer long, dimming their rattles."



<sup>2</sup> Georg Büchner, *Lenz*, in *Complete Plays and Prose*,  
trans. Carl Richard Mueller (NY: Hill & Wang, 1963), p.  
141.

concoct – doctor – adulterate (maturate) (implication of  
suspicious / dubious intent)

Time (Lacan + hesitation) + assumption (receiving)

Philosophy as exotericism – (knowledge as superstition)  
monads, the One, epoche's etc. (abstraction + obscuring /  
versus posturing – suspending things without simply  
obscuring your little special secret ideas)

Abstract:

v. taking away from/concealing (a. abstruse – concealed,  
hidden, secret; remote from apprehension or conception;  
difficult, recalcitrant.)

some findings – something to think about for  
breaking/making (falling for things/things falling for us..)



Lazlo Moholy-Nagy levitating a chisel.



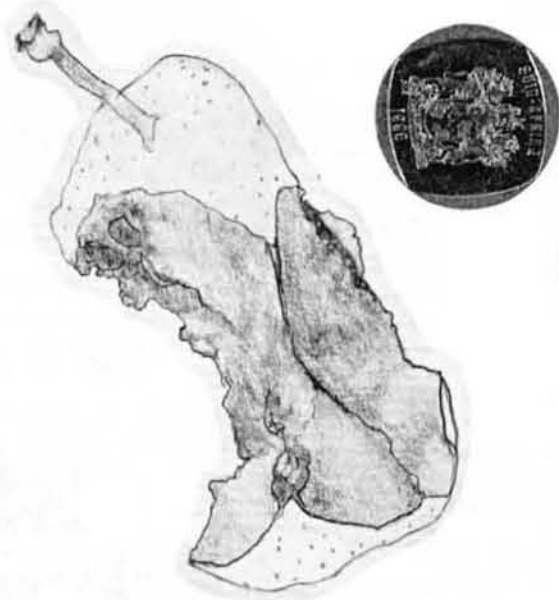
Hans Haacke, "Sphere in Oblique Air-Jet", 1967.

Fractals (+ crystals and organs)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fractal>

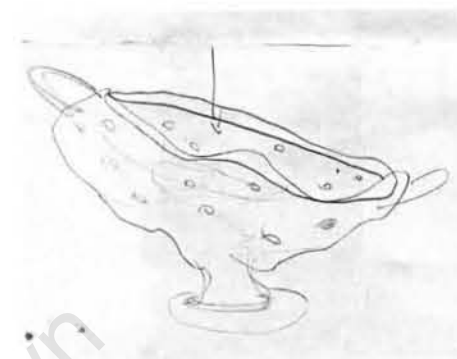
<http://fractalart.com>

(Moholy-Nagy and the rest of them; what they were doing  
wrong) (?)



something to do; repetition

(Above) pencil on paper cutout.



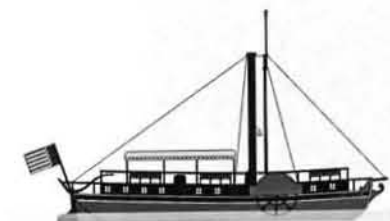
"I'm not saying it is double-bottomed, but there are lots and lots of holes in the bottom" (Lacan 2008: 74).

Jacques Lacan; holes

(Above) excerpt from Lacan's My Teaching.

holes; Don Quixote (helmet)

(Left) drawing of a colander.



IMPOSING ORDER VS. IMPOSING PHOBIA'S  
FRANZISKA (MILK PRODUCTION) ALWAYS WORKING) BEING LEFT WITH NOTHING  
VS. KINEMATIC OF LACAN/ART THERAPY

TRAILS  
APPLES AND GRAPES  
STEAMSHIPS (TAL-STAILS)

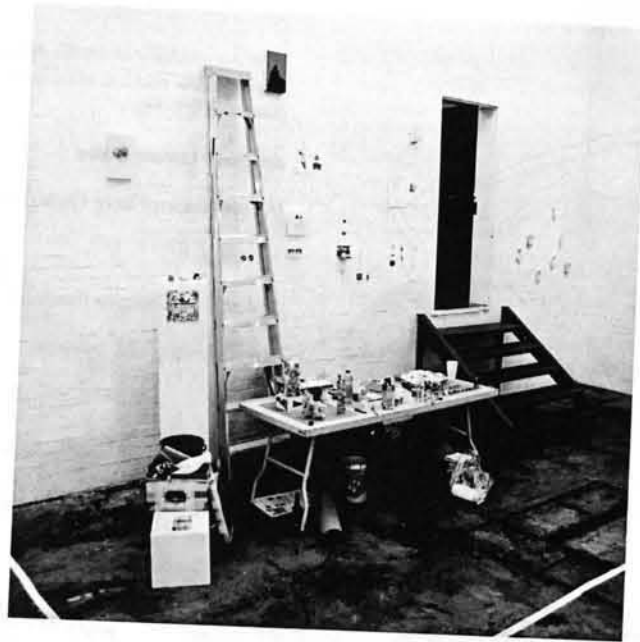
positions (aphasic); steamship; circular performance; food (apple); food (pear); states of being (dynamic); slips

(Immediately above) found image of a steamship with accompanying note.

food (apple); superstition; repetition; rotten nature

(Right) liquid plastic apple core cast.





an experiment in logic, method and practice

setting traps

art as an exercise in problem solving

wanting something from nothing and vice versa, or  
neither (knowing what you want)

a lapse of reason, slipping up

making things that are what they are

a belatedly successful attempt at composure

a kingdom of calm

**reasonable and unreasonable combinations**  
(installation); experiment without controls; slips; there  
is no solution because there is no problem; exhibition;  
giving and receiving; space-time (smooth)

(Above) retrospective note on *Reasonable and unreasonable combinations* (installation exhibited as part of the MFA progress exhibition *In Principle* in May 2009). Accompanying image shows the adapted version of the *reasonable and unreasonable combinations* installation for the second run of *In Principle* shown in August 2009 at the Substation gallery, University of the Witwatersrand.



**reasonable and unreasonable combinations (installation); truth (the truth is always new); masters vs. daddies; a time for comprehending; kitsch; explanation; it is what it says it is; indulgence**

(Above, below and following pages) assorted drawings and printed designs generated and exhibited during the second run of *reasonable and unreasonable combinations* (see preceding page). Additional keywords are listed below appropriate images.

anote to  
the viewer:

what this is a  
performance, rather than, performance.  
This is what I have been doing  
under the auspices of a masters  
degree — things have come full  
circle from doing nothing  
(wrecking elbow) to making  
things that are what they  
are and taking what I get.  
The installation will ~~be~~  
be added to intermittently over  
the next two weeks, I will  
be here working till Thursday  
morning.  
There is also a walkabout  
tonight/15 August at one o'clock  
and a general discussion  
around the show at two



things that are round (sphere); repetition



animals (crocodile)

I  
wish  
I could  
stay

/say

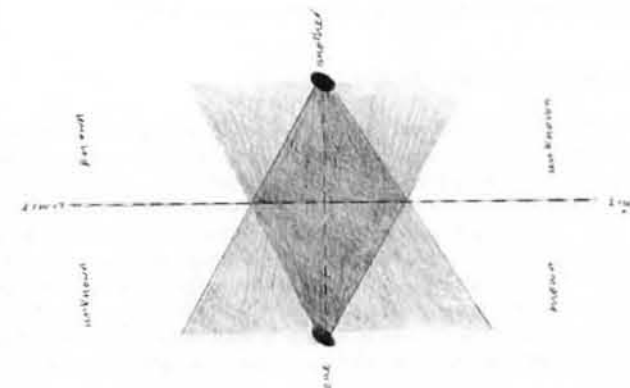
love; states of being (definitely empty);  
sentiment



Donny van der Meer

animals (hippopotamus); cacolydates

(Immediately above) found image received from Ryan  
van Huyssteen.



projection; geography (unpassable paths); limit; people; known vs. unknown



things that are round (sphere); repetition; assumption; conditions of making  
(meaning)

Gilles Deleuze; Claire Parnet; direction; middle; positions (centre); states of being (static); geography (paths with neither beginning nor end); Samuel Beckett; exhaustion; restraint; third; states of being (hyperceptive); experiment; conversation; movement

Excerpt from Deleuze and Parnet's *Dialogues* (1987: 29-31) with own commentary.

An enviable (unviable) position – being in the middle (the third, the spare):

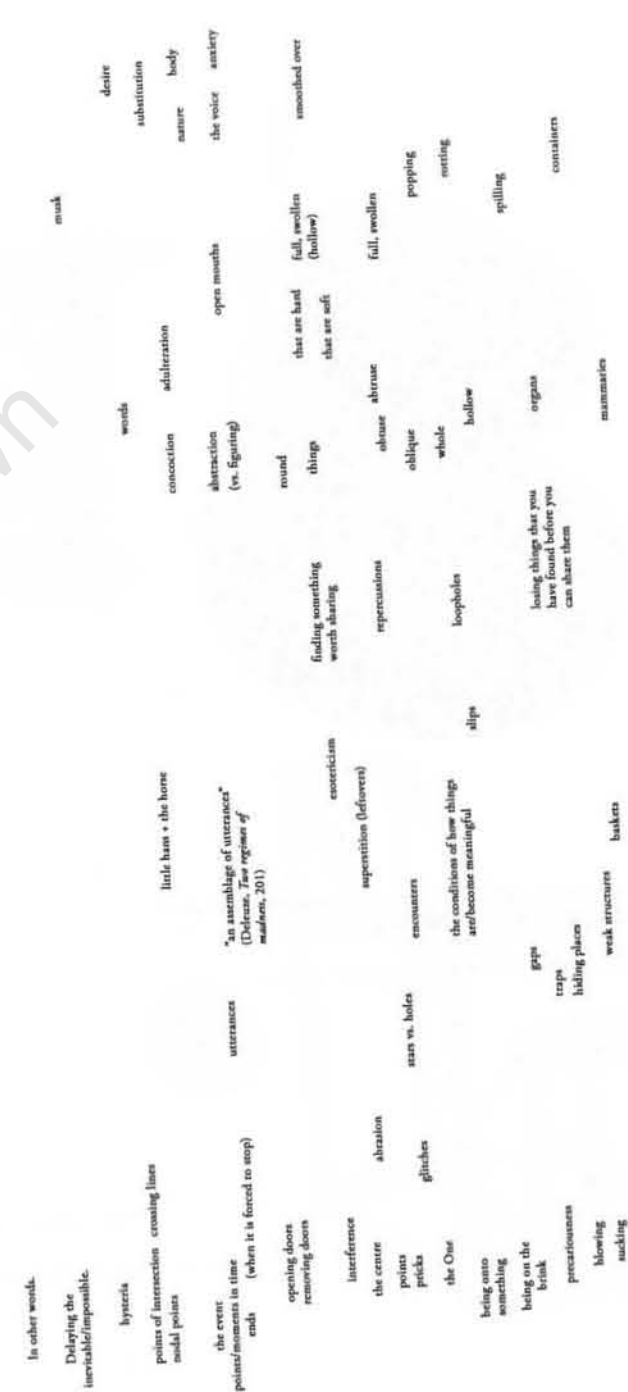
"What matters on a path, what matters on a line, is always the middle, not the beginning or the end. We are always in the middle of something. The boring thing about questions and answers, about interviews, about conversations, is that usually it's a matter of taking stock: the past and the present, the present and the future ... the embryo, evolution, are not good things. Becoming does not happen in that way. In becoming there is no past nor future – not even present, there is no history. In becoming it is, rather, a matter of involuting; its neither regression nor progression. To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that very reason populated. This is what's difficult to explain: to what extent should one involute. Its obviously the opposite of evolution, but it is also the opposite of regression. To involute is to have an increasingly simple, economical, restrained step. ... Experimentation is also involutive, the opposite of the overdose. It is also true of writing: to reach this sobriety, this simplicity which is neither the end nor the beginning of something. To involute is to be 'between', in the middle, adjacent" (Deleuze & Parnet 1987: 29).

"Beckett's characters are in perpetual involution, always in the middle of a path, already en route. If one has to hide, if one has to put on a mask, this is not because of a taste for the secret which would be a little personal secret, nor as a precaution – it is because of a secret of a higher nature, that is, that the path has no beginning or end, that it is in its nature to keep its beginning and end hidden because it cannot do otherwise. It would no longer be a path, it exists only as a path in the middle" (30).

"Grass only exists between the great non-cultivated spaces. It fills in the voids. It grows between – among the other things. The flower is beautiful, the cabbage is useful, the poppy makes you crazy. But the grass is overflowing, it is a lesson in morality" (Henry Miller, *Hamlet*, Paris: Correa, p. 49) (Henry Miller in Deleuze & Parnet 1987: 30).

"The middle has nothing to do with an average, it is not a centrism or a form of moderation. On the contrary, it's a matter of absolute speed. Whatever grows from the middle is endowed with such a speed. We must distinguish not relative and absolute movement, but the relative and absolute speed of any movement... The relative is the speed of one movement considered from the point of view of another. But the absolute is the speed of movement between the two, in the middle of the two, which traces a line of flight. Movement does not go from one point to another – rather it happens between two levels as in a difference of potential. Absolute speed can measure a rapid movement, but not a very slow movement or even an immobility, like a movement on the spot" (Deleuze & Parnet 1987: 30-31).

Is there space within a degree of mastery to enact such an in between, to disappear effectively and allow oneself to simply be amongst the others? You are always in the centre, you are the middle.



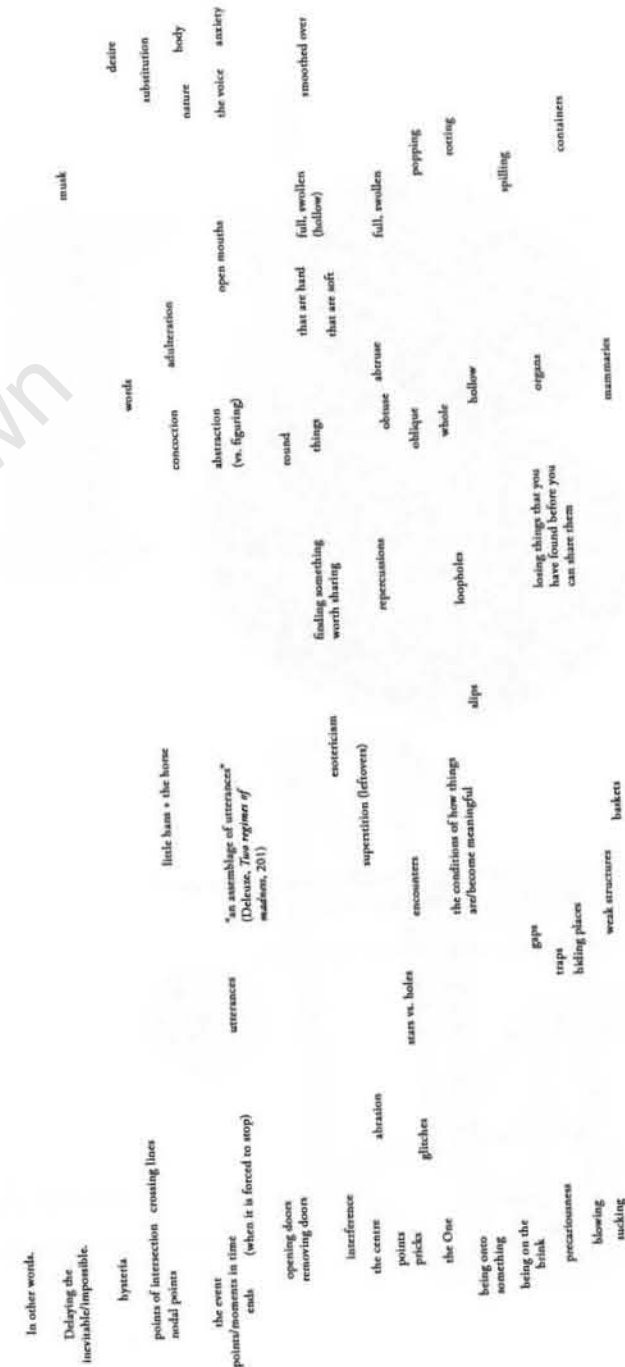
in other words; repetition; keywords; pricks; language (word games); aerial view; geography (constellation)

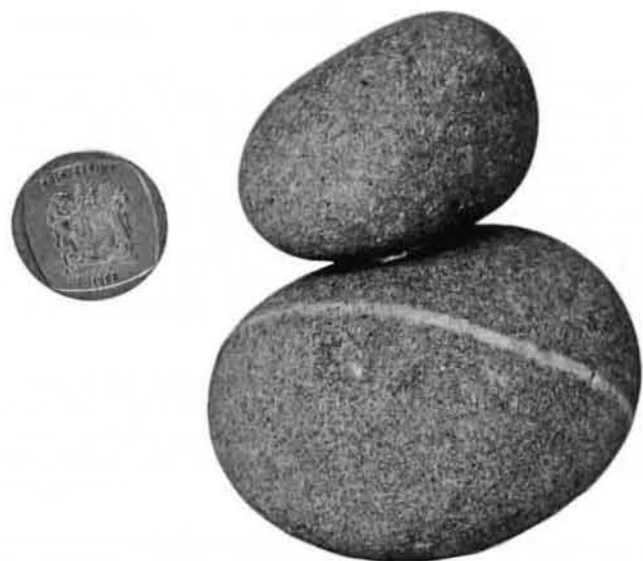
Map of collected keywords.



Is there space within a degree of mastery to enact such an in between, to disappear effectively and allow oneself to simply be amongst the others? You are always in the centre, you are the middle.

Map of collected keywords.





*things that are round (spheroid); intensity; balance; states of being (static); Castle Rock; geography (sea)*

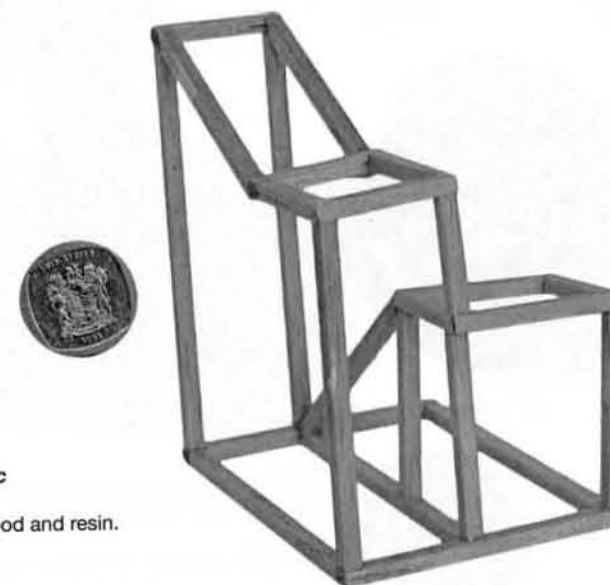
Stones from Castle Rock (Western Cape) with prestik.

B.B.90.



*rotten nature; food (apple); superstition; truth*

(Left) apple cores. Received from Bianca Baldi.



*unit; weak logic*

(Right) balsa wood and resin.

(top) B.B.93.2.  
(bottom) B.B.91.



stones; emollient; things that are  
round (spheroid)

(Left) stone.



rotten nature;  
repetition; truth

(Right) liquid plastic  
apple core cast and  
enamel.



stones; emollient; things that are  
roundish

(Left) stone.



B.A.3. (top-left)  
B.A.32. (middle-right)  
B.A.42.7. (bottom-left)



rotten nature; food (pear);  
superstition

(Left) pear cores.



animals (rhinoceros); magic; experiment; what  
happens when nothing happens; craft (hobby)

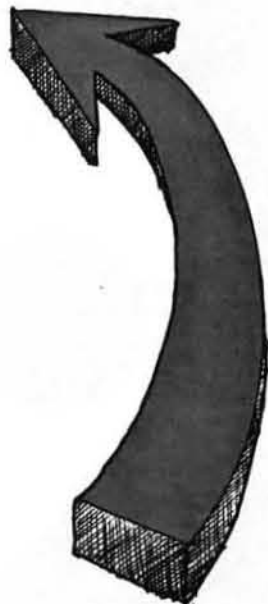
(Immediately above) plastic rhinoceros, magic sand  
and carved zebrano wood block.

intensity; unbecoming; pricks

(Object B.A.23. not pictured) floor-  
board nails.

(top) B.B.92.1-2.  
(bottom-left) B.A.55  
(bottom-right, not pictured) B.A.23.

YES



*provisional philosophy of yes;  
direction; Douglas Gimberg;  
positions (hero)*

(Immediately above) notebook  
diagram by Douglas Gimberg  
(own annotation).



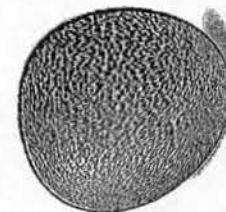
*things that are round (swollen); things that are  
round (sphere); rotten nature; collaboration;  
something to do*

(Above) pencil, enamel and oil on canvas (painted over  
an existing canvas received from Christian Nerf).



*things that are roundish; body (organs); kidney  
stones; doctors; body (blood); body (flesh);  
accident; funny stuff*

(Immediately above) found image of diseased kidneys.



1. You just know that something  
good is going to happen.



Francis Buge and Christian Nerf, 2008

*something good; Christian Nerf; collaboration; conditions of making (meaning);  
assumption; language; language (word games); it is what it says it is; positions (demiurge);  
popular opposites*

(Above and following pages) booklet produced in collaboration with Christian Nerf. Additional  
keywords are listed below illustrated page spreads.

## 1. You Just Know That Something Good Is Going To Happen

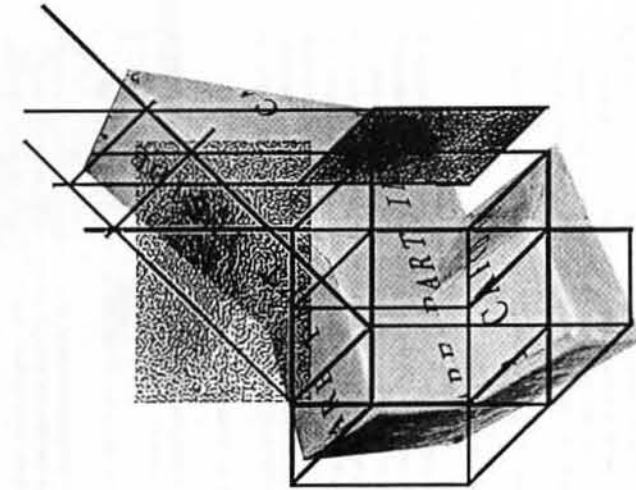
In the beginning we worked together on numerous art projects and generally had a good time. Then tragedy struck. We each went through some life changing stuff and this revealed things that would break even the cold hearted. Close to death, close to meaninglessness and closer to the truth. Goal posts shifted. Enough bullshit, we want the truth.

So, here we are presenting some premature thoughts from our yet to be titled work. This particular document is an open envelope, designed loosely to accommodate the various starts of a discursive/conversational environment. A short, packaged submission that spells out some of what it is that we think we might be doing. Why expose unfinished stuff you may ask? In the spirit of openness we acknowledge that we will never be finished. Over the next decade we intend to unearth secrets, hide our discoveries and pursue uncalled-for newness. We will lean towards theory but not shy away from making stuff (and breaking stuff). This much we promise.

(As it happens, the structure that this collection of texts, objects and images has activated shares its divergent sympathies between words that are indefinitely ambiguous (words that can mean indefinitely and without restraint) and those that simply mean what they say. Amongst other instances, the impossibility/improbability of the demands that have emerged from within this space offers an example of the dynamic that this shared sympathy instigates.) (The question of whether such a conflicted/contradictory dynamic (where a statement can be inverted without a change in direction) works simply because we want it to work is completely useless to us at this stage.)

  
F.M. Burger & C.A. Nerf

*pornographic tendency; third; accident; positions (romantic); body (blood)*



PART 16: It gets what it asks for (and nothing else). Not specifically a revelation of supply and demand (and/or vice versa). In the context of desire, the dynamic of knowing something out and wanting something in return just necessarily something in particular immediately suggests an imbalanced exchange—where nothing but words are given in order to receive. If this is the case then what is gained relies on the worth of the words that have somehow managed the asking. What happens when the words don't work? Or, worse, what happens when they do? At times our learned mistrust of language prevents us from asking. At other times, our faith is misplaced in the power of its intentions and our requests are never heard.

Note to self: Never give up on your desire. (Do we need to know what to ask for in order to get the thing that we want? How is the thing that is given/received affected by the fact that it was requested, either directly or specifically?)

Note to other: My father always said that if you don't ask you don't get. I put this into practice in my corporate days and found that when asking one is actually demanding (and backing up the demand with a threat). Then you get what you want. I learnt what I wanted very quickly and neglected what I needed.

PART 18: Hold on one moment. Sit in the dust. Blindfold yourself if necessary. Someone is cutting an orange and telling you, "I am cutting this orange" while "in four" while "for you". Try to pick up the zesty fragrances that are no doubt filling the darkness. Yes? You can smell the usual things but you know that stuff can smell and sound different in the dark. You recall a time where, at half time, an orange saved you, quenched your thirst. Consider that without this seemingly simple signifier and without trust you may be faced with an apple.

Note to self: What good is it being right?

PART 17: Structure and logic. What are the repercussions of constructing things that are flexible, loose, supple? (Where lines are drawn so that we have things to bend.) Logically speaking, these structures are weak.

"A weaker logic is not less interesting than a stronger logic, in fact it is much more interesting, because it is much more difficult to make it stick...but it holds up all the same." Jacques Lacan, *My teaching* (2006, p32).

Note to self: Overlooking principles/limitations in order to let other things slip in unnoticed (to surprise us later).

PART 1: "You start, I'll finish." "No you start, and I'll finish."

Note to other: What good is it being right and/or being successful and/or being a winner?

*giving and receiving; desire; weak logic; Jacques Lacan*





THE WORDS ARE / AREN'T WORKING [...] The only condition of this exchange

will be that it must remain honest [...] it feels as if it isn't supposed to work like I dislike the final product [...] we agreed on an out clause [...] projection? [...] and that [...] figure out the truth / trust thing [...] have occurred / are occurring / will empty concept (yes, it eludes to so many so called issues) But its got nothing on occur [...] 2 legit 2 quit [...] What is it that enables interactions that would this [...] is this art? Or is this proof that life is more fulfilling than art? [...] otherwise be impossible [...] (working) for or against (each other) or ourselves because its art, it's funny and deadly serious, isolated from the other [...] items (?) [...] making ourselves available [...] saying nothing [...] mute witnesses [...] we [...] what we are making is rare [...] the possibility of uncalled for newness [...] can do this because we don't need "to face" each other [...] you stayed at the can we recognise this? [...] perhaps [...] without the hindrance of normality [...] doorway and I was trying to look cool - looking for cigarettes, saw you were still we will get past the point of thinking straight [...] are you seeking to there [...] I am so sick and tired of bullshit [...] lose patience (your word) [...] find counterbalance [...] ? [...] I hope we will find unrestrained freedom, this is a space [...] reread everything again [...] I know that I don't need to explain sounding way idealistic [...] the desire to be engulfed [...] straight forwardness [...] myself [...] I want to say all of these things and somehow believe that it will a real sense of balance [...] future we may turn the tables become some kind of coherent explanation [...] some screaming possibly [...] at [...] there will be much we can gain from this approach [...] so far, so good [...] least another one thousand times [...] And yes, we should record it. [...] our ten should we record this? [...] if this is a question [...] you are smarter than me [...] year plan works for me [...] the third party is intangible [...] awkward, what I have always wanted? [...] common ground [...] mutual respect [...] working humiliating, even unpleasant - without there being a problem [...] an honest space with others is a fast track to getting out of my mind into your shoes and some [...] move away from subscription [...] closeness; (versus comfort [...] give each unforeseen scenarios [...] this third party that manifests [...] that is what I am other [...] I feel as though, now, writing this, these things / notes shouldn't be after. And it is that voice that is spellbinding for everyone [...] you saved me as I destroyed. In a way, I appreciate the fact that if they are obliterated the did you [...] Same time, same place [...] can we hold back on this? [...] unknown symbolism is that of truth - they become history [...] I trust things that don't let [...] loose patience [...] unusual [...] the way forward [...] how far do we have to words work more than anything - but also things that do [...] and art... I'm still on go? [...] "you go your way" [...] "and I'll go mine" [...] from now on. holiday from it, I think I will stay as long as I can. Art and life, there are somehow

no privileges for art [...] it's a deal

art vs. life; honesty; surrender; states of being (definitely full); states of being (coprophagous)



erotic tendency; geography (cave); sentiment

PART 17: What to want. Is there any real difference between knowing what you want and wanting what you know? (Or in future, getting what you want and taking what you get?) To know what you want implies a certain amount of self-understanding, but also, fortunately, an even larger amount of misrecognition. (To get what you want and to take what you get are only different if you believe that you know what you want. Then, when you get it, you know it.)

What does it mean to take what you get without knowing whether you want it or not? Is there such a thing as miscommunication? (Misguided intentions coupled with misguided interpretations.) How far could this be taken? There are surely different spaces for failed instructions, directives or interpellations that land in the wrong place at the wrong time and those other moments where words simply work (the right place at the right time?)

Note to other. Misinformation vs. disinformation.

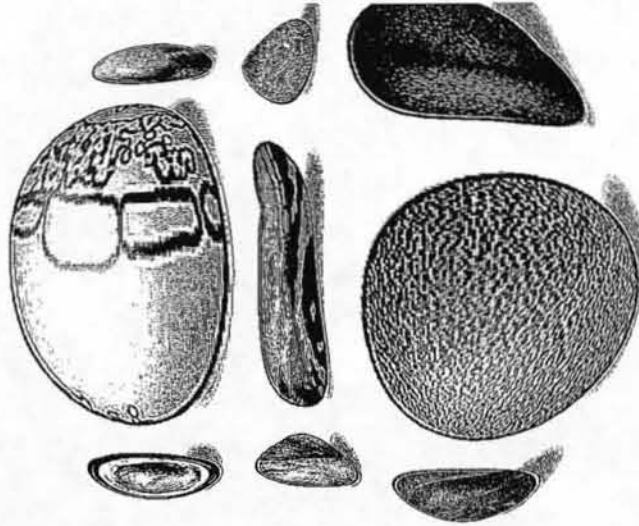
Are these moments of recognition or ill-conceived assumptions? (Or is this exactly what we wanted?)

PART 18: Making excuses / tall stories / building castles in the sky. Believing the lie vs. living it. (How much should we assume of our assumptions?) (Why are we inclined to mistrust them?)

Note to self. Eat or be eaten. Do or be done to. (Give me a P... give me an U... etc.) (Physical/mental consumption. What does it mean to spend your time reading romance novels?)

Note to other. The thin line between cynicism and criticality (disempowering vs. empowering criticism) (believe, truth, the good fight etc.)

PART 19: Work and play. Being serious about an outcome seems to be key. Alternatively one can just say that one will do stuff (with the other) and know, have faith that it is worth one's while to just do stuff and learn from it. This does not mean one has to share the findings with the other. (See: Joy Koyenik, go-rgone, no no wa, do-love-me ngondel, go-rgone) (You and I have never been together in setting traps. You should not therefore expect to accompany me when I am visiting my traps.) (www.mbandoko.com)



PART 17: Mumbling, muttering (funny but deadly serious). It is worth squashing these things together to bring up the issue of performance and the point at which the performance either fails or ends (in life, in art, in your dreams) when the gap between the performance and the performer is exposed and all that is exposed is the gap itself. Do we laugh (nervously) or cry (uncontrollably)? What is it that demands such a cover? And what is to be done with the thrill of that one awkward stutter? It is not a question of compassion, of holding brief instances of common weaknesses lightly against a swelling chest. (We want to say 'suspend your disbelief and fall down the rabbit hole', but this is a trap, we may have laid it, but it is not one that we laid for ourselves.)

PART 18: Anxiety. Could it be only anxiety that pushes us past the point of such nausea, repulsion, horror, and towards a grip that cannot be pried open? Is anxiety the only real emotion? There is a voice that speaks, not mumbling, not muttering, it continues to speak beyond the possibilities of performance....

PART 19: Word processing.

Note to self. What can we say that will not upset the applicant?

Note to other. What can we say that will upset the applicant?

PART 20: Little do we know.

PART 21: Common ground. Our meeting was over and I put the notes down on the chair and thought 'that would be a real fuck-up if I forgot them'. That thought then became a suggestion and I let all the directions and diagrams behind. The sooner we get the stuff back the sooner we can destroy everything and we can rethink?

Postscript - the notes were subsequently retrieved and unceremoniously burnt. (We can now look forward.)

PART 22: Making history.

Note to self. Others often have something else in mind / on the mind.

PART 23: Common sense. (When words do work - normality, repetition - difference, sameness.)

Note to other. An acknowledgement of the perverse power of words to mean what they say

Note to other. Some people like to think others don't. This is what separates some from others.

PART 24: Screaming (not yawning). Earlier this year the Sunday Times reported that members of an 'Orgone' cult were arrested. 'Operation Paradise' included dropping Orgone grenades outside the Koeberg nuclear power station and on the grave of Cecil John Rhodes; tossing rougher versions called 'Dirty Harry's' from their Land Rover beneath every cellphone tower they saw, and donating an all-healing 'zappper' device and a weather-altering 'cloud buster' machine to Thabo Mbeki's mother.

PART 25: No fun. Never admit to being happy, enjoyment, or to having fun. Things should always be taken seriously.

Note to other. The art of second-guessing.

PART 26: Impossible demands. To find a hole that is empty enough to expose something of the truth but one that is also big enough to stand up in...to be for and against, without the option of either both or neither...to perform controlled experiments without any controls....

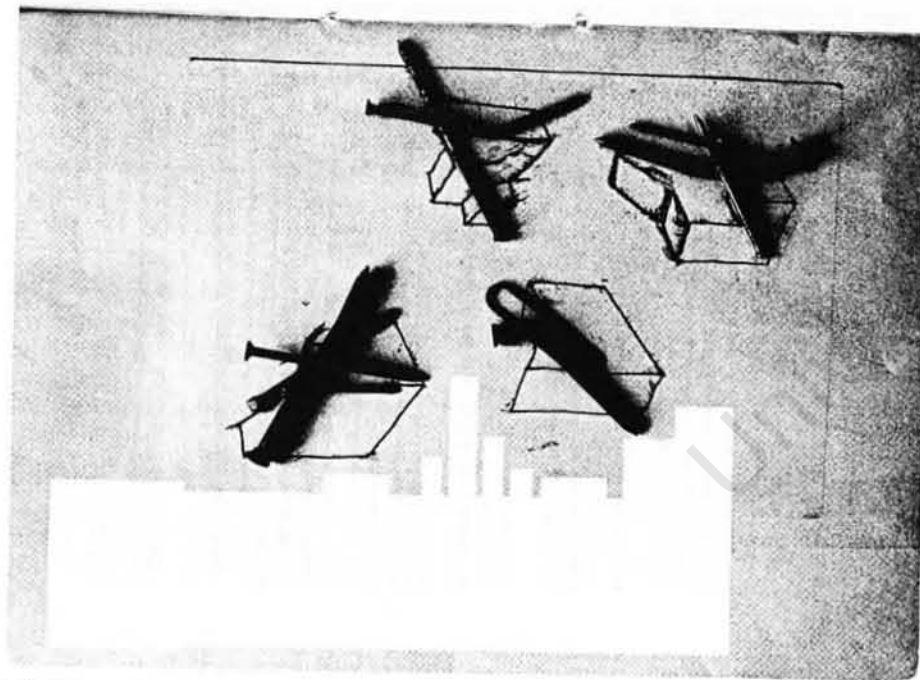
PART 27: What good is being right?

PART 28: Don't ask me.

PART 29: You go your way, and I'll go mine.

Note to other. It's a choice between my way and the highway then I say pack the car.

PART 30: Two in the bush. What we want, in the one hand, are those words / objects / things / ideas that are restless and disobedient. What we want, in the other hand, are those other words / objects / things / ideas that sit comfortably in a coat pocket, waiting for companions or points of intersection, waiting for you.



body (excrement); Douglas Gimberg; intersection points

"It is when you come across a single word at the intersection of three ideas that you notice that the important thing is that word and not something else... it is when you have found the word that concentrates around it the greatest number of impacts in the mycelium that you know it is the hidden centre of the gravity of the desire in question. That, in a word, is the point I was talking about, the nodal point where discourse forms a hole." Jacques Lacan, *My teaching* (2008, p28).

#### PART 31: Repetition.

Note to self: Something that starts to happen at points of intersection that become too dense, too used, too similar. (How to attach words without stringing them up and realising that they have dried out. How to work with these holes without smoothing them over.) (Being able to recognise when and why things have/have not changed.)

PART 32: In other words. We are reading ourselves to give birth to some new-fangled thing and nurture it to a point that it rejects us.

Addendum: one might use the form of the content to carry the meaning as opposed to the "actual meaning" of the words to make the meaning because as mentioned the words cannot be trusted. Hence, to make matters of the words in order to have the reader construct the actual meaning themselves (as this is the only way in which the reader would believe it anyway - to believe that you are wrong because of...). Douglas Gimberg



pedagogy; history; instruction; common sense; fire; states of being (dynamic); something good

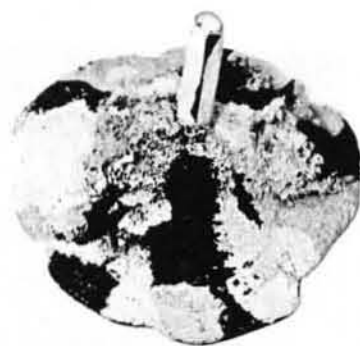
(Above) digital photographs showing the cremation of research material for *Something Good* (see preceding pages).

*[Two handwritten signatures in blood]*

superstition; body (blood); intensity; positions (narcissist)

(Immediately above) signatures in blood for *Something Good* (see preceding pages).





assemblage; architecture  
(monument); space-time (smooth)

(Left) balsa wood, enamel,  
pewter and lint.

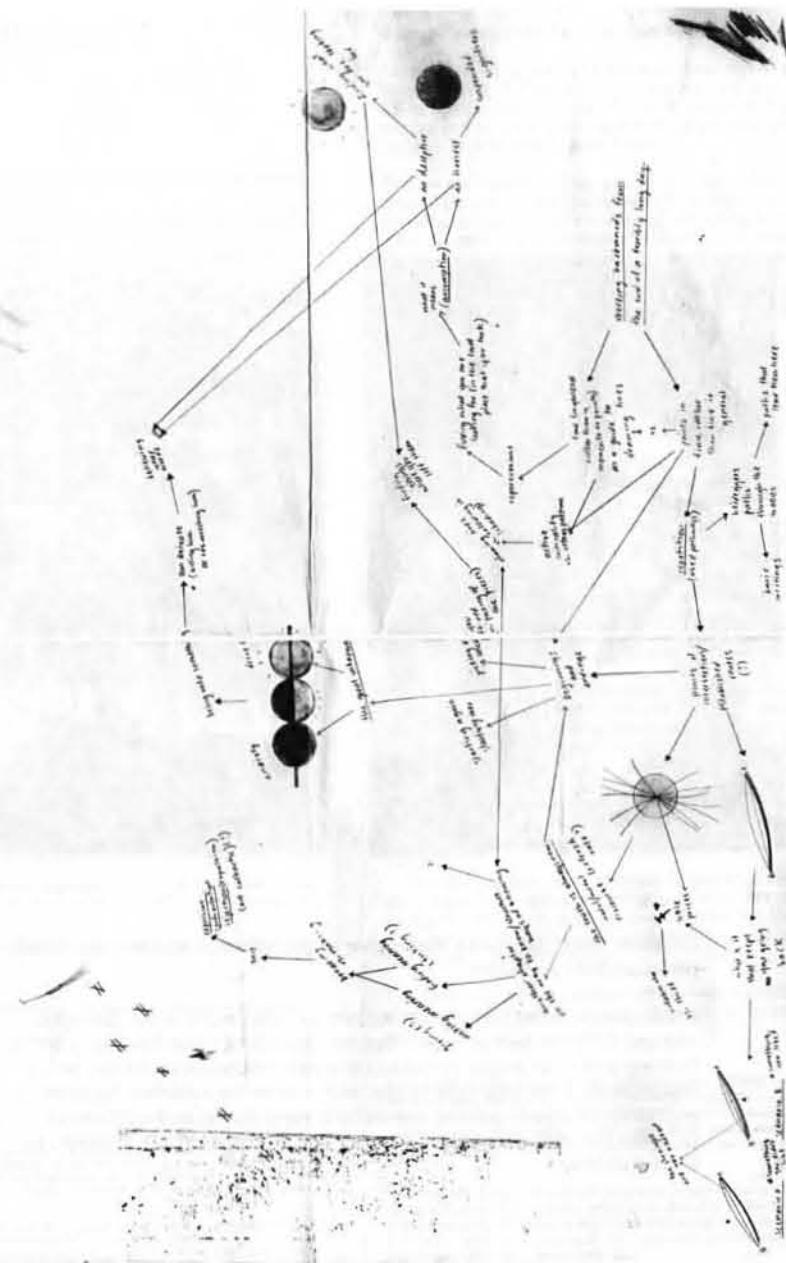


partial object complete with  
missing parts; spare part;  
unit; architecture (trap);  
architecture (exedra);  
place-holder

(Right) cardboard and  
packing tape. Assembled  
by Christian Nerf.



B.A.31. (top)  
B.B.100. (bottom)



Don Quixote; art; time; repetition; conditions of making (meaning); geography (paths defined by use);  
zigzag; something to believe in; intersection points; process

Map of intersections between looking, finding and making and their bearing on spaces (geographic and  
architectural) and time.





**Christian Nerf; Barend de Wet; other works other; positions (scoundrel); collaboration; surrender**

(Immediately above) exhibition invitations for *other works other*, Barend de Wet and Christian Nerf at Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town (July 2007). Forming part of an ongoing contractual agreement between the two artists that gives each the legal right to sign as the other the exhibition featured an installation of objects painted bronze by Barend de Wet and authored as Christian Nerf and objects painted white by Christian Nerf and authored as Barend de Wet.

## Ottenere più vicino

(Un testo breve su altro opere altro)  
Francis Burger

### Giochi di amore

Che genera di pratica occupano questi oggetti (i bronzi)? Queste sono cose che sono che cosa sono.

Quello ha descritto l'altro come artista che ha cominciato giocando i giochi. Quando ci non erano più giochi da giocare si è arrestato. Ora lui fa questi così.

### Non siete voi stessi

Gli oggetti bianchi sono qualcos'altro – ma ancora le opere di quello piuttosto che l'altro. Diventa occasionalmente confusionario quanto a quale sta tentando di essere l'altro. Ad altre volte, si trasforma in confusionario se l'altro sta tentando di essere quello, o in qualcos'altro complessivamente (o se uno sta tentando qualche cosa affatto).

Come testimone, piuttosto che un spettatore, uno è propenso pensare che alcune di queste cose possano avere qualcosa fare con voi. Ma nessuno di questo ha qualche cosa fare con voi.

### Il caso non è chiuso perché non è stato aperto mai

Sappiamo che questo contratto non può essere preso seriamente i firmatari hanno firmato via le loro firme.

È precisamente questo dei voti che invita sia la nostra fiducia che loro.

### Allora, parliamo di questo

A proposito di fiducia, e, implicitamente, verità [1], il rapporto che i collaboratori hanno forgiato fra se stesso è quasi ideale – le relazioni di lavoro quello conta sulla fiducia di entrambi che ciascuno funga da altri altro, e poiché, quello dichiara, qualunque che cazzo che desiderano con il loro nome.

### È che cosa è

Fra noi e l'altre opere altro è un'affermazione sobria e quasi piacevole delle cose che sono che cosa sono – una sottomissione compassionate, non essere sormanto, ma cooperare semplicemente.

Ci sono altri modi, ma questo è come leggere queste cose [2].

Come contrapporono la pietà fra il spettatore e l'oggetto fino a quella fra i due collaboratori?

Potrebbe la prossimità che il contratto impone loro suggerisce qualche cosa simile al tentativo precedentemente di descrivere il rapporto fra il spettatore e l'oggetto come pietà cooperativa? Quanto vicino fa l'imposizione di un rapporto venga ad essere "vicino" – a scambiare gli occhiali e sentire la pressione delle gomme di un altro attraverso le setole di un spazzolino da denti (è una differenza reale fra la spazzolatura dei denti di qualcuno e una stretta di mano?).

Potete essere vicini, compassionate, cooperativo, più vicino – con tutta la passione gioiosa che introduce la vostra mano nella stretta di un altro – ma per non soccombere o non essere inghiottito.

In questo caso, l'altro non è il vostro vicino, potete parlare oggi, e mai ancora.

### Il ponte del diavolo

Il contratto non è stato firmato nell'sangue. Qui, dove non ci sono padroni, non saranno anime sfortunate.

1. Un obiettivo per il futuro è di implicare la verità con l'onestà, per dichiarare che l'onestà richiede un impegno alla ricerca per la verità. Mentre può essere il progetto dello sciozzo, il genere di cavalleria molto ingenua che richiederebbe meriterebbe soltanto mai il rispetto più grande. Quelle agganciate in una tal ricerca diventerebbero l'unica gente che potremmo fidarsi di mai, per fiducia dovrebbe contare sempre sull'onestà, e tali gente non si dicano bugie mai.

2. Una congiunzione di pietà e di cooperazione, progettato qui come senso descrivere un metodo con esperienza, conta sul mutualità implicita dalla coincidenza del "co-" (quale non è semplicemente coincidente in quanto la coincidenza di entrambi i termini dissipa l'associazione della pietà con un forzato, equilibrio condiscendente piuttosto che coincidente).

**love; proximity; collaboration; Barend de Wet; Christian Nerf; Bianca Baldi; luck; surrender; it is what it is; intersection points; positions (neighbour); honesty; play; satan; people; other works other; cacolydates**

Text written for *Other Works Other* (2009) translated into Italian by Bianca Baldi.

## Getting closer (A short text on other works other)

**Love games.** What kind of practice do these objects (the bronzes) occupy? These are things that are what they are. The one has described the other as an artist who began by playing games. When there were no more games to play he stopped. Now he makes these things.

**You are not yourself.** The white objects are something else – but still the work of the one rather than the other. At times it becomes confusing as to which one is attempting to be the other. At other times, it becomes confusing as to whether the other is attempting to be the one, or something else altogether (or whether either is attempting anything at all).

As a witness, rather than a viewer, one is inclined to think that some of these things may have something to do with you. But none of this has anything to do with you.

**The case is not closed because it was never opened.** We know that this contract cannot be taken seriously because the signatories have signed away their signatures. It is precisely this disavowal of vows that invites both our trust and theirs.

**So let's talk about it** On the subject of trust, and, by implication, truth [1], the relation that the collaborators have forged between themselves is almost ideal – a working relationship that relies on the trust of both that each will act as the others' other, and do, as the one states, whatever the fuck they want with their name.

**It is what it is.** Between us and the other works other there is a sober and almost pleasant affirmation of things being what they are – a compassionate submission, not to be overcome, but simply to cooperate. There are other ways, but this is how to read these things. [2]

How does the compassion between the viewer and the object match up to that between the two collaborators? Could the proximity that the contract imposes on them suggest something similar to the attempt above to describe the relation between the viewer and the object as a cooperative compassion? How close does the imposition of a relation come to being 'close' – to swapping spectacles and feeling the pressure of another's gums through the bristles of a toothbrush (is there any real difference between brushing someone's teeth and shaking their hand?)

You may be close, compassionate, cooperative, closer – with all of the joyous passion that brings your hand into the clasp of another's – but not in order to succumb or be engulfed.

In this case, the other is not your neighbour, you may speak to him today, and never again.

**The devil's bridge.** The contract has not been signed in blood. Here, where there are no masters, there will be no unlucky souls.

1. A goal for the future is to implicate truth with honesty; to state that honesty requires a commitment to the search for truth. While it may be a fool's project, the very selfish kind of chivalry that it would require would only ever deserve the greatest respect. Those engaged in such a quest would become the only people we could ever trust, for trust should always rely on honesty, and such people would never lie.

2. A conjunction of compassion and cooperation, intended here as a way to describe an experienced approach, relies on the mutuality implied by the coincidence of the co- (which is not simply coincidental in that the coincidence of both terms dispels the association of compassion with a forced, condescending equilibrium rather than a coincidental one).

Being prepared to die alone.

Abuses of power, being straightened out.

What does it mean to tell the truth, to be told the truth, to speak the truth or have it speak through you?  
How does the one face the other (truth and lies?)  
Can life move so far away from itself that it gets closer to art  
(can can life be so close to art that it cannot not be art)?  
Is it really about art, getting on with it, does art have anything to do with anything?  
(What does anything have to do with anything?)

Why does it need to be painful (art and trauma)?

Do artists need to leave marks? (can't we just say nothing)  
Can we make something out of nothing or vice versa?

Definitely full, definitely empty.

How does one get people to expect less from them and more from everyone else?  
How does one make themselves available?  
Who is speaking/being spoken to? (Does it help to speak in/to/of the third person?)  
How does one know who is third (or first)?  
Who is the second person?

Getting on with it.  
How is it possible, all of a sudden, to expect things to be beyond expectation?  
Can one expect something different and/or do things differently?  
Does difference require things to be done differently? (what is it good for, what can be done for it?)  
Can we rely on difference, on perversions, to take a stand?  
Are we for or against, or for and against (can we be for being for and/or against)?

Is it worth it?

What does it mean to fill a gap; does it make any less of a gap if it is just less empty/more full?  
(is it better to live with the gap?) (why do we need spare parts?)

Can something be complete with missing parts?  
How seriously can it be taken?  
Can one ever really be concious while losing control?

Never admit to being happy.

Expose everything.

Say nothing.

*pornographic tendency; erotic tendency; states of being (dynamic); states of being (definitely full definitely empty); third; truth (speaking for itself); art as a question; spare part; partial object complete with missing parts*

Self-directed questions and statements.

vs.

and/or

second vs. third vs. second and third (vs. first)

vs./and

-philia vs. -phobia

and/and

setting traps and falling into them vs. setting traps or falling into them

and/or

art and life vs. art or life

and/and

getting on vs. getting on with it

and/vs.

screaming vs. shouting

and

saying nothing and having nothing to say vs. letting it all hang out

or

performing and/or posturing vs. self-restraint

vs.

being restrained

and/and

being honest vs. telling the truth

vs.

being straight vs. being straightened out

and/or

filling the gap vs. finding spare parts

and/and

and

drowning and waving vs. strangling or suffocating (being engulfed vs. being contained)

and

enforcing control (being concious) vs. losing control

and

knowing what you want and getting it vs. getting what you know

and/vs.

wanting what you know vs. taking what you get

and/or

setting traps vs./and/or making holes

and/and

wanting intensely vs./and/or wanting intensity

or

believing in belief vs. believing vs. believing intensely

and

intensity vs. composure

and vs. and/or

taking things seriously vs. never admitting to being happy

and/or

vs./and

and/and

*popular opposites; forced choice; desire; third; something to believe in; intensity; architecture (trap); language (word games)*

List of oppositions, additions and alternatives.

Dr Desmond Woolf  
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Date: 8/7/09.  
FRANCIS MANGO MUMBER.  
DOB 6/6/1986.  
THE ABOVE PATIENT WAS ADMITTED  
TO HOSPITAL 30/5/2009, AND WAS  
CHARGED 6/6/2009, WITH ENCEPHALITIS.  
SHE IS STILL RECOVERING.

Yours.  
C. M. M. M.

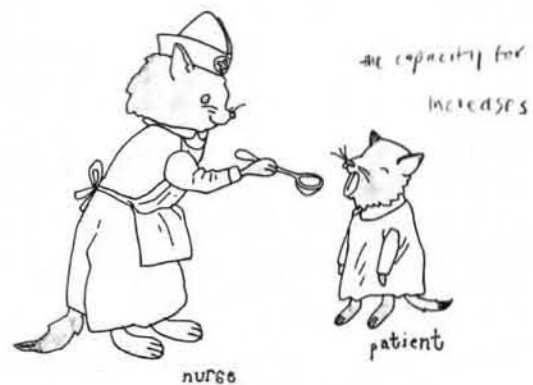
accident; body (brain); doctors; positions  
(aphasic); pornographic tendency;

Doctor's note from Dr. Desmond Woolf detailing  
my hospitalization as a result of contracting  
encephalitis. (Notable symptoms included  
seizures with mild aphasia).

IT IS WHAT IT IS...  
Considering your/one's reputation (Brent)  
Have you ever felt as though you are a complete fraud?  
Love games  
First you have to play games, when you run out of  
games to play you stop. When you start again you  
stick things together and sprays paint them and  
they will make sense to everyone.  
Politics  
Friendship (the contract is bullshit)  
Pick a shot  
You are not yourself (Liam + the high at the analysis)  
Whole/hole  
It is because long. Errors that truth exists.  
So let's talk about it.  
AMORE  
When confronted with facts at this nature one is  
inclined to think that it is a whole which is placed  
in front of you. But in fact, the whole is a fiction.  
to do with the whole, the whole is a fiction.  
one is inclined to think that all of this time something  
is done with you, but this has nothing to do with you.

cacolydates; surrender; it is what it is; truth; love; trust; there is no solution because there is no  
problem (the case is not closed because it was never opened); other works other; positions (scoundrel)

Notes from a conversation with Barend de Wet and Christian Nerf.



*doctors; states of being (open); pedagogy*

(Above) pen and pencil crayon on paper.



*erotic tendency; food (chocolate);  
sediment; sentiment*

Chocolate and foil. Received from  
Ryan van Huyssteen.

*knife-holder; accident; body  
(brain); missing piece; body  
(calculus)*

(Right) plasticine  
hippocampus segment.



(top) B.A.36.  
(bottom) B.A.56.

LACAN: MY TEACHING.

p29

p23  
So you see, it's the opposite of what I was saying -  
I told you that his place was an accident and at  
the end of the day, I was pushed into the hole we  
are talking about, and now one would be tempted to  
say that the reason why I fight so seriously is  
that, once it has started, you can't stop just like that.

26 So when I talk about a hole in the tooth, it is not, naturally, a divide-and-conquer. It is not a hole in a jacket, so it's the negative aspect that appears in everything to do with the example. However it's inability to alter. There's no neat psychoanalysis. It's ad hoc.

26. Language is not a representation (to all)

It is very unusual for anything that happens in the university to have repercussions. Because the university is designed to ensure that things never have any repercussions.

22.  $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$  and  $g(x) = \frac{1}{x^3}$  are both functions on  $\mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}$ .

language people can't hear in their first language

27. 100% of words = ditransitive verbs, all double obj words, have 1 in discourse, manipulating, puns, analogies

24 Freud describes the dream as a certain kind of an organized assembly of analogues (other forms that interest us not, not because of what they signify, but thanks to a sort of homonymy).

It is when you come across a single word at the intersection of 3 ideas that come to the surface that you notice that the important thing is that word & not a something else.

*early learning; oneiric house;  
architecture (house);  
craft (hobby)*

(Right) found illustration showing a miniature house building set.



24 cont. - It is when you have found the word that encompasses  
around the greatest <sup>of</sup> themes in the Anglican  
that you know is the heart center of the growing of  
the desire in question. That, in a word, is the point  
I was talking about just any the usual pain would  
disappear from a whole.

WHOLE / HOLE

$\rho = \frac{1}{2} \rho_{\text{проект}}.$

29. It is because language exists every where every

4. Let's talk about it. This table is something important for

92. bear down physical + logical

(concomitant theory) is a logic that [...] is where weaker, as the logicians say "weaker" indicates the presence or absence of certain bars or correlations on which the tolerance of that logic is based. A weaker logic is not less interesting than a stronger logic, in fact it is much more interesting because it is much more difficult to make it work, but it has of all the same.

*pedagogy; Jacques Lacan; holes; truth; language; weak logic; intersection points*

Transcribed excerpts from Lacan (2008: 23-32).



*reasonable and unreasonable combinations (installation); exhibition; giving and receiving; experiment; process; architecture (cockpit); spookies; truth; honesty; art as an exercise in problem solving*

(Below) installation view of *Reasonable and Unreasonable Combinations*. Sporadically updated and altered installation with wall text, image and object map, found and made objects, and two plinths. Installed as part of the MFA group show, *In Principle*, (May 2009) at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts. Photograph by Paul Weinberg. Above images and following six pages show associated paraphernalia generated and exhibited within the exhibition space (where appropriate, additional keywords and sources are provided below each illustration).







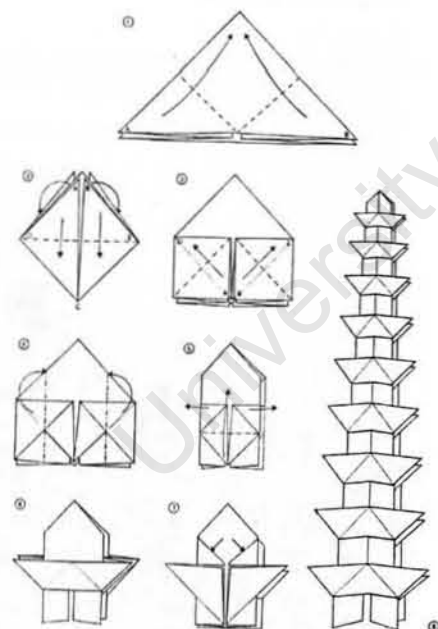
body (nose); noses; food (apple); Nina Simone vs. Elizabeth Taylor (everybody knows about Mississippi); animals (horse); William Kentridge



geography (strata); geography (garden)



architecture (monument); conglomerate (superficial)



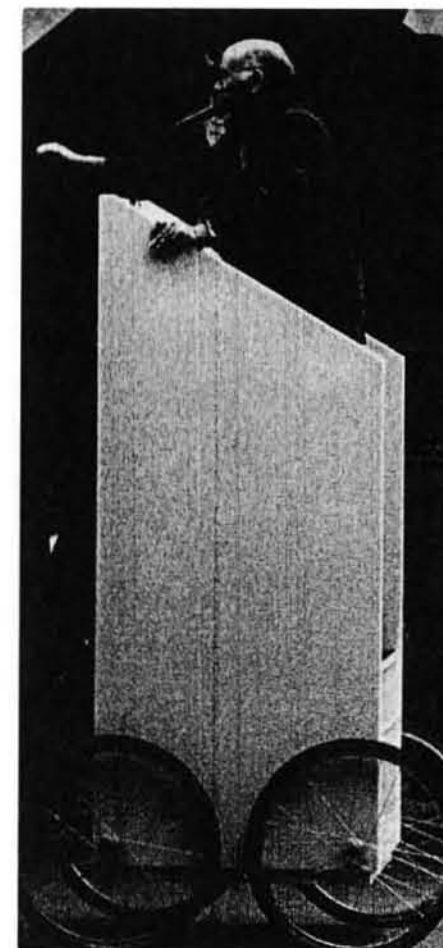
architecture (monument); craft (hobby); something to do



spookies



geography (outer-space); fire; announcements to the universe

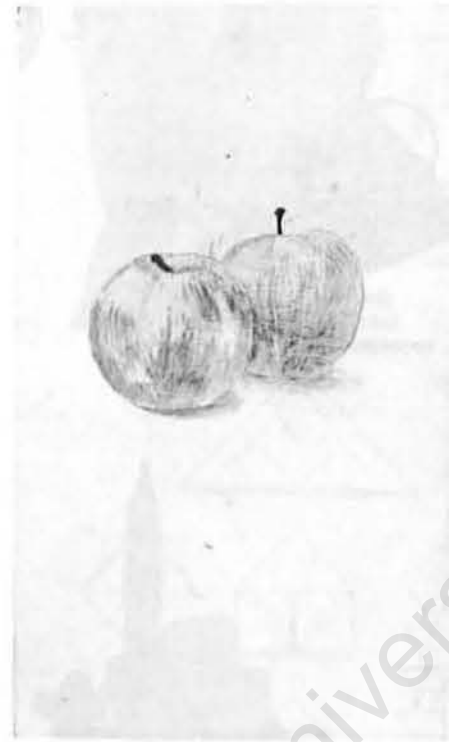


announcements to the universe; prophesy; propaganda; Krzysztof Wodiczko; reinventing the wheel; conditions of making (making the conditions for making)

Krzysztof Wodiczko's critical vehicle as illustrated in Wodiczko (1999).



aerial view; geography (relief);  
states of being (static)



food (apple); repetition; truth; something to do

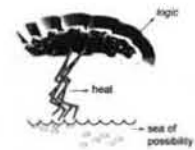
A prison warden summons three choice prisoners before him and announces to them the following:

For reasons which I need not make known to you now, gentlemen, I must free one of you. In order to decide which, I will entrust the outcome to a test that you will, I hope, agree to undergo. There are three of you present. I have here five disks differing only in color: three white and two black. Without letting you know which I will have chosen, I will fasten one of them to each of you between your shoulders, outside, that is, your direct visual field - indirect ways of getting a look also being excluded by the absence here of any means by which to see your reflection. You will then be left at your leisure to consider your companions and their respective disks, without being allowed, of course, to communicate among yourselves the result of your inspection. Your own interest would, in any case, proscribe such communication, for the first to be able to deduce his color will be the one to benefit from the discharging measure at my disposal.

But his conclusion must be founded upon logical and not simply probabilistic grounds. Keeping this in mind, it is agreed that as soon as one of you is ready to formulate such a conclusion, he will pass through this door so that he may be judged individually on the basis of his response.

This having been agreed to, each of our three subjects is adorned with a white disc, no use being made of the black ones, of which there were, let us recall, but two. How can the subjects solve the problem?

(Lacan 2006: 161-162)



fulguration

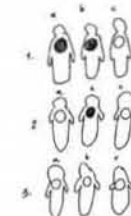


penumbra

the  
omnipotent  
leader

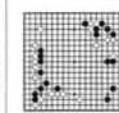


reading  
and  
writing



perverting theories of  
language etc. to formulate  
a method/mode of practice  
(e.g. Lacan's *Logical time*  
and the assertion of *anticipatory*  
certainty: a new  
suspicion as ... a new way  
of having nothing)



playing God, perverting  
theories of language to  
formulate a method/mode  
of practice, e.g. the *suspended*  
signifier (the *primacy*  
of the signifier) as  
a moment in the process  
of creation.





play; Ivor Powell; Elizabeth Roudinesco; Jacques Lacan; fulguration; penumbra; reading  
and writing; positions (god); suspended signifier

### The perfect solution

By envisioning each possible combination, and witnessing the others' hesitation to leave, each prisoner follows the same reasoning to deduce that he is white, and all three leave together.

If there were two black discs, one of us would have left immediately, ~~but~~  ~~because~~  yet no-one has left.

If only one of us had a black disc, then the one who could see both a black and a white would see that I had not left and therefore deduce that he is not black (in which case I would have left immediately, knowing that I am white). 

The only conclusion is therefore that, since not one of us had left yet, we are all wearing white discs. 

### ● ● ● (II) Were I a black, the two whites that I see would waste no time in realizing that they are whites.

We have here an intuition by which the subject objectifies something more than the factual givens offered him by the sight of the two whites. A certain time is defined (in the two senses of taking meaning and finding its limit) by its end, an end that is at once goal and term. For the two whites in the situation of seeing a white and a black, this time is the time for comprehending, each of the whites finding the key to his own problem in the inertia of his semblable. The evidence of this moment presupposes the duration of a time of meditation that each of the two whites must ascertain in the other, and that the subject manifests in the terms he attributes to their lips, as though they were written on a handkerchief: "Had I been a black, he would have left without waiting an instant. If he stays to meditate, it is because I am a white". But how can we measure the limit of this time whose meaning has been thus objectified? The time for comprehending can be reduced to the instant of the glance, but this glance can include in its instant all the time needed for comprehending. The objectivity of this time thus vacillates with its limit. Its meaning alone subsists, along with the form it engenders of subjects who are undefined except by their reciprocity, and whose action is suspended by mutual causality in a time which gives way due to [sours] the very return of the intuition that it has objectified. It is through this temporal modulation that, with the second phase of the logical movement, a path is blazed which leads to the following evidence:

### ● ● ● (I) Being opposite two blacks, one knows that one is a white.

We have here a logical exclusion which gives the movement its basis. The fact that this logical exclusion is anterior to the movement, that is, that we can assume it to be clear to the subjects with the givens of the problem – givens which forbid a combination involving three blacks – is independent of the dramatic contingency isolating the preambular statement of these givens. Expressing it in the form two blacks: one white, we see the instantaneousness of its evidence – its fulguration time, so to speak, being equal to zero. But its formulation at the outset is already modulated by the subjectivation, albeit impersonal, which takes form here in the "one knows that..." and by the conjunction of propositions which constitutes less a formal hypothesis than a still indeterminate matrix of such a hypothesis; we can put it in the following consequential format designated by linguists with the terms "protasis" and "apodosis": "Being..., only then does one know that one is..." An instance of time widens the interval so that the pregiven of the protasis, "opposite two blacks," changes into the given of the apodosis, "one is a white," the instant of the glance being necessary for this to occur. Into the logical equivalence between the two terms, "two blacks: one white," temporal modulation introduces a form which, in the second moment, crystallizes into an authentic hypothesis; for it now aims at the real unknown of the problem, namely the attribute of which the subject himself is unaware. In this step, the subject encounters the next logical combination, and – being the only one to whom the attribute "black" can be assigned – is able, in the first phase of the logical movement, to formulate thus the following evidence:

### ● ● ● (III) I hasten to declare myself a white, so that these whites, whom I consider in this way, do not precede me in recognizing for themselves what they are.

We have here an assertion about oneself through which the subject concludes the logical movement in the making of a judgment. The very return of the movement of comprehending, before [sours] which the temporal instance that objectively sustains it has vacillated, continues on in the subject in reflection. This instance reemerges for him therein in the subjective mode of a time of lagging behind the others in that very movement, logically presenting itself as the urgency of the moment of concluding. More strictly speaking, its evidence is revealed in a subjective penumbra as the growing illumination of a fringe at the edge of an eclipse that the objectivity of the time for comprehending undergoes due to [sours] reflection. It seems to the subject that the time required for the two whites to understand the situation in which they are faced with a white and a black does not logically differ from the time it took him to understand it himself, since this situation is merely his own hypothesis. But if his hypothesis is correct – if, that is, the two whites actually see a black – they do not have to make an assumption about it, and will thus precede him by a beat [temps de battement] he misses in having to formulate this very hypothesis. It is thus the moment for concluding that he is a white; should he allow himself to be beaten to this conclusion by his semblables, he will no longer be able to determine whether he is a black or not. Having surpassed the time for comprehending the moment of concluding, it is the moment of concluding the time for comprehending. Otherwise this time would lose its meaning. It is thus not because of some dramatic contingency, the seriousness of the stakes, or the competitiveness of the game, that time presses; it is owing to [sours] the urgency of the logical movement that the subject precipitates both his judgement and his departure ("precipitates" in the etymological sense of the verb: headlong), establishing the modulation in which temporal tension is reversed in a move to action manifesting to the others that the subject has concluded. But let us stop at this point at which the subject arrives in his assertion at a truth that will be submitted to a test of doubt, but that he will be incapable of verifying unless he first attains it as a certainty. Temporal tension culminates here since, as we already know, it is the sequential steps of its release that will stand the test of its logical necessity.

language (combinatorials); time; hesitation; a time for comprehending; movement

(All above text) excerpts from Lacan (2006: 176–2009).

In her biography of Lacan and his system of thought, Elizabeth Roudinesco relates that "Lacan came across this sophism one evening in 1935 at Sylvain Blondin's apartment. It was there that he first met Andre Weiss, who told him about the puzzle without revealing the solution. Lacan lay awake trying to find the answer. At three in the morning he phoned Weiss, who told him the answer, though he was furious at being woken up in the small hours" (Roudinesco 1997: 176).

The dilemma of the prisoner's reasoning was to form the bulk of the discussion in Lacan's (2006: 161–175) "Logical time and the assertion of anticipated certainty; A new sophism", which, as Roudinesco (1997: 177) explains, begins with a derivative remark regarding Sartre's conception of freedom as expounded in Huis clos;

**"I am not one of those recent philosophers for whom confinement within four walls is merely another expedient for attaining the ultimate in human freedom"**

(Lacan 2006: 162)

Among other things, Lacan objected to Sartre's argument that existential psychoanalysis was preferable to Freudian psychoanalysis owing to its abolishment of the overtly biological and mechanistic conception of the unconscious and its assertion that "nothing exists until the first stirrings of freedom" (Roudinesco 1997: 177). Lacan's counterargument, as Roudinesco explains, was all too plain, "not only is man not free to choose his own fetters – there are no first stirrings of freedom – but in order to be free he is doomed to become part of the community of men, via a process of logical thought" (177). The individual subject can only relate to others, therefore, via a horizontal axis, and can only be lead to truth via the power of logic. "After Husserl therefore, and against Sartre, Lacan stood for a philosophy of concepts, into which he tried to incorporate a nonsubjective philosophy of the subject or, as he put it, an "existential indeterminism of the 'I.'" In doing so, he made all human freedom dependent on a temporal event: to each individual comes a "time for comprehending" in the light of which he can make a logical decision" (178).

### The modulation of Time in the Sophism's Movement: The instant of the Glance, the Time for Comprehending, and the Moment of Concluding.

One can isolate in the sophism three evidential moments whose logical values prove to be different and of increasing order. To lay out the chronological succession of the three moments would amount once again to spatializing them through a formalism which tends to reduce discourse to an alignment of signs. To show that the instance of time presents itself in a different mode in each of these moments would be to preserve their hierarchy, revealing therein a tonal discontinuity that is essential to their value. But to discern in the temporal modulation the very function by which each of these moments, in its passage to the next, is resorbed therein, the last moment which absorbs them alone remaining, would be to reconstruct their real succession and truly understand their genesis in the logical movement. That is what I will attempt, starting from as rigorous a formulation as possible of these evidential moments.

freedom; Jean-Paul Sartre; leaderless group

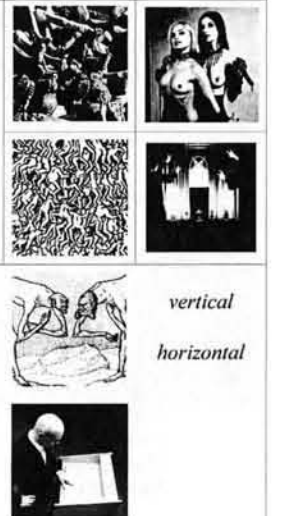
As Roudinesco (1997: 172–3) details, the argument put forward in *Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty* was influenced heavily by Lacan's recent interaction with English wartime psychology and his reformulation of Freud's theory of the horizontal and vertical axes of social organization.

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud analyzed the group dynamics of the church and the army, both of which have a "vertical axis stemming from the relationship between the group and the leader" and a "horizontal axis involving the relationships among the individuals of which the group is composed". The vertical axis designates identification with the leader as an object that augments or replaces the individual member's ego-ideal, while the horizontal axis designates the relationships or bonds between the members themselves. Freud saw the vertical axis as the most definitive of the two, the horizontal axis being dependent on it for its formation (Roudinesco 1997: 173).

Specifically the "leaderless group" experiments performed by John Rickman and Wilfred Bion, who in 1939 "had decided to make use of slowpokes, shirkers, dullards and delinquents by assigning them to various tasks in the rear. Without actually segregating them, they separated "misfits" from ordinary fighting men so as to spare the latter the neurotic shock of contact with disturbing elements". Their findings showed that the "misfits" themselves improved as a result of being regarded as useful and functioning as independent subgroups" (Roudinesco 1997: 172).

(Lacan 2006: 167–169)

“ ”



*architecture (monument);  
announcements to the universe;  
craft (hobby)*

(Right) paper origami pagoda



*craft; announcements to the universe; architecture (podium);  
Mike Kelley; crack; space-time  
(smooth)*

(Right) sanded pine block with  
enamel, pen and pencil crayon.



B.A.49. (top)  
B.A.68. (bottom)



*freedom; positions (hero); third; escape to Robben Island; Gimberg Nerf; accident; collaboration*

Film stills from a short video by Gimberg Nerf documenting Douglas Gimberg and Christian Nerf removing a pair of handcuffs from Ryan van Huyssteen.



*craft; announcements to the universe;  
architecture (podium); Mike Kelley; thank you  
Douglas; space-time (smooth)*

Sanded pine blocks with spray paint.

B.A.4. (top-left)  
B.A.5. (top-right)  
B.A.8. (bottom-left)  
B.A.7. (bottom-right)



*architecture (monument);  
announcements to the  
universe; craft (hobby)*

Coloured cardboard  
origami pagoda.



B.A.33.





## A NEW WAY OF HAVING NOTHING

**a new way of having nothing; animals (unicorn); something to believe in; explanation**

(Above and following pages) seminar paper presented as part of the MFA seminar program at the Michaelis School of Fine Art. Additional keywords are listed sporadically underneath illustrated page spreads.



~~announcements to the universe~~

~~Being used by language~~

arbitrary nature of the sign + the primacy of the signifier

The importance of sabotaging meaning (x) productive confusion

~~1.2 playing the fool - undermining meaning~~

~~1.1 don Quixote (3.1)~~

~~1.3 self interview (truth and lies)~~

(f)

unable to be wrong (contingency; impossibility etc.)  
sickness vs. confusion (1.3)

~~Disparity between theory and practice - production as an exercise in problem solving~~

~~intransmissible things - homeless objects~~

~~giving and receiving~~

~~I GIVE YOU MY WORD~~ truth etc.

~~THE THING~~

partial object, complete with missing parts

~~The impossible (mathemes and knots)~~  
calligrams

~~Cynicism as a disempowering mode of criticism~~

~~Pretending is as good as believing~~

~~time to choose - when it is better to do nothing~~  
exhaustion

(x)

BELIEVING IN SOMETHING (x)  
~~beating the lost-trojan-horse full of nothing~~

~~LET'S GET STUPID (3.1)~~

~~The signifier and minimal difference~~

~~Saying the same thing twice~~  
~~you can never slip in the same shoe twice~~

~~DUTY (kant)~~

who is it for? (Big other/master signifier)

Plan for seminar paper/thesis plan

**masters vs. daddies; keywords; hidden logic; something to believe in**

## A NEW WAY OF HAVING NOTHING<sup>1</sup>

This following section was initially conceived as a clarification of the fundamental premises of the deliberations that follow. The effect of its form, as it has materialised, is now something more like an aggressive raking which aims to turn dense ground into something more workable and ends up with a collection of rocks.

**1** What is later referred to as the problem of meaningful existence (and, consequentially, meaningful production) is tied up with the following things that I have been convinced by/about language:

### 1.1. Language is characterised by empty speech:

As Slavoj Žižek (2008: 219) explains, "what characterizes human language, in contrast to the most complex signals of bees, is what Lacan called 'empty speech,' speech whose denotative value (explicit content) is suspended on behalf of its function as an index of intersubjective relations between speaker and hearer". Going on to identify 'Kremlinology' as an example of such a 'suspension' at work, Žižek (219-220) cites Stephen Kotkin's comment that, prior to the opening of the Soviet archives, the criticism leveled at foreign scholars for basing their kremlinological research on hearsay rather than fact was misdirected; 'Kremlinology' arose not at Harvard, but in and around the Kremlin. Amid the inter-ministerial warfare and Mobius-strip intrigues, Stalinist life and death remained opaque no matter where you stood or who you knew.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet 'empire of signs' (220), though saturated with alternate, clandestine meanings, was as such, entirely void of "direct denotative meaning".

As is developed in the later discussion of the primacy of the signifier, to emphasize the omnipresence of "empty speech" with regard to language is to emphasize the fallibility of language in general.

### 1.2. The nature of the linguistic sign is arbitrary:

As explained by Ferdinand de Saussure (1983: 67-69) in his *Course in General Linguistics*, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. "There is no internal connexion, for example, between the idea 'sister' and the French sequence of sounds s-o-r which acts as its signal. The same idea might as well be represented by any other sequence of sounds" (67). Following Lacan's (2006: 416) own assertion of its value, his adaptation of the commonplace illustration showing the signified and its signifier (the schema on the left is an inversion of Saussure's) (1983: 67) is worth reproducing here.<sup>4</sup>



"For the signifier is a unique unit of being which, by its very nature, is the symbol of but an absence. This is why we cannot say of the purloined letter<sup>5</sup> that, like other objects, it must be or not be somewhere but rather that, unlike them, it will be and will not be where it is wherever it goes...it is the imbecility of the realist who does not pause to observe that nothing, however deep into the bowels of the world a hand may shove it, will ever be hidden there, since another hand can retrieve it, and that what is hidden is never but what is not in its place, as a call slip says of a volume mislaid in a library..." (Lacan 2006: 17).

(3)

rocks; suspended signifier; language (as empty speech); language (the arbitrary nature of the sign); missing piece; ladies and gentlemen; Jacques Lacan; Slavoj Žižek; purloined letter; kremlinology

1. Acknowledgement 253 of 424 taken from Liam Gillick 'An investigation of the non-specific qualities that affect the meaning and relative status of the art object in the developed self-conscious neo-liberal productive context', 2009. Text.

2. The Kremlin housed the Soviet government. 'Kremlinology' is the study of Stalinist jargon.

3. To an extent, the idea of Stalinist jargon providing an example of the suspension between a sign and its signified content relies on Žižek's later explanation of the properly carnivalesque dimension of Stalin's regime, "of 139 Central Committee members, 98 were killed, of the Central Committee of the Ukraine republic, three out of two hundred survived, 72 of the 93 members of the Komsomol organization Central Committee perished... 2.210 of 2.750 party secretaries died" etc. (Overy cited in Žižek 2008: 249).

To elaborate further, Žižek (2008: 220) provides a telling anecdote regarding the pervasiveness of this 'empire of signs', during the show-trial (the 'show trials' of the 1930's were the public face of the purges that Stalin directed inwards on his own party) against the 'United Trotskyite-Zinovievite Center', a list of individuals that were to be assassinated by this dissident 'center' ('Stalin, Kirov, Zhdanov...') was published. Inevitably fabricated and published by the regime itself, inclusion on the list 'became a bizarre honour since inclusion signified proximity to Stalin'. Getting back to Kotkin's comment on the ominous relevance of rumour within the Soviet Union, Kotkin (cited in Žižek 2008: 220) relates the story of Dimitrov, a party member who became agitated and confused at his exclusion from the honor presidium on International Woman's day, his records note that "of course, this is no accident! But what does it mean?", "Ah, but what did it mean?" Kotkin deliberates, Dimitrov, "who could scarcely have been closer to the Kremlin was an inveterate Kremlinologist, studying Mausoleum choreography, divining omens, drowning in rumours..."

Interestingly, Lacan (2006: 439) notes in a footnote to *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious*, that "discussion about the need for a new language in communist society really did take place, and that Stalin, much to the relief of those who lent credence to his philosophy, put an end to it as follows: language is not a superstructure".

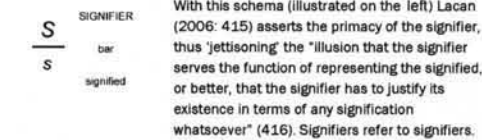
4. In relation to the illustration Lacan (415) notes that this version of the diagram can be considered "more correct only because it exaggerates the incongruous dimension psychoanalysts have not yet altogether given up, because of their justified sense that their conformism derives its value from it alone". In addition to this Lacan (2006: 416) recalls a childhood story told to him by a friend upon seeing the illustration: "A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated across from each other in a compartment next to the outside window that provides a view of the station platform buildings going by as the train comes to a stop. 'Look,' says the brother, 'we're at Ladies!' 'Imbecile!' replies his sister. 'Don't you see we're at Gentlemen!'"

5. Though referencing the short story by Edgar Allan Poe, the reference here is double, alluding to both the letter that is the object of the story and the abovementioned use of the letter as a 'pure' suspended signifier (see note 7).



### 1.3. The primacy of the signifier.

Following Saussure, Lacan's observation regarding the arbitrariness of the sign is that "we can take things no further along this path than to demonstrate that no signification can be sustained except by reference to another signification" (2006: 415).



### 1.4. Language hands down its sentence to those who know how to hear it.<sup>6</sup>

"Words, he says he knows they are words. But how can he know, who has ever heard anything else?" (Beckett 1985: 355). As explained by Elizabeth Roudinesco (1997: 270) in her chronicle on the life and thought of Lacan, the notion that the signifier is independent of the signified lead Lacan to the idea of the signifier as a letter.<sup>7</sup> As that which precedes signification the letter is devoid of meaning – nonetheless, it is this primal signifier that "determines the unconscious destiny of the subject".

"The subject, while he may not appear to be the slave of language, is still more the slave of a discourse in the universal movement of which his place is already inscribed at his birth, if only in the form of his proper name" (Lacan 2006: 414).

In a process akin to the game of *Forti Da!*<sup>8</sup> the subject, whose Cartesian "I think" is replaced by Lacan with a Freudian "It speaks" (Roudinesco 1997: 270), becomes enveloped within the "concrete discourse" that surrounds her by throwing out words and reeling them in again (Lacan 2006: 262).

### 1.5. Language is performative:

"From Wittgenstein to Lacan, this statement traverses the century: 'There is no metalanguage'... language says, and this 'saying' cannot be re-said in any speech that would itself be appropriate" (Badiou 2005: 138-9).

The signifier is performative in that, through its occurrence, it "produces or transforms a situation" (Austin cited in Derrida 1972: 13). In addition to this, the performative functioning of language, following Derrida's (1972: 15) development of the structure of the performative, is necessarily infelicitous (or as Austin puts it, unhappy). The potential failure of the performative (in ignorance of its intended effect) is a predicate of its functioning, and, as such, does not constitute an

6. (Lacan 2006: 16).

7. By 'letter' I designate the material medium [support, translators note] that concrete discourse borrows from language" (Lacan 2006: 413).

8. The 'game' is described by Freud as follows, a small boy throws a wooden reel and retrieves it by means of a string attached to it, announcing 'Go' on its disappearance and 'Ah' on its retrieval. Freud interprets the sounds as fort ('gone') and da ('there') (Macey 2000: 133).

accident or impurity.<sup>9</sup> Although Derrida (1972: 17) does concede, anticipating objection; that "you cannot deny that there are also performatives that succeed, and one has to account for them: meetings are called to order... people bet... christen ships, and sometimes even marry... even if only one had taken place only once, we would still be obliged to account for it". His reply is only, "Perhaps".

### 1.6. Language (*lalangue*) is universal babble:

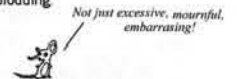
In his annotation of the word *lalangue* Lacan (1987: 10) provides the following:

"general equivocation, universal babble, or 'Babelian'"

On the subject of *lalangue*, Žižek (BWL: sp) argues that while *lalangue*, which "stands for language as the space of illicit pleasures that defy any normativity, the chaotic multitude of homonymies, word-plays, "irregular" metaphoric links and resonances..." the "rhizome-like jous-sense (enjoyment in meaning, enjoy-meant)" that it proliferates is less valuable than the reduction of language to a "minimum of antagonisms" as achieved by Samuel Beckett. Beckett, Žižek proposes, commits a true ethical act in his renunciation of the "wealth of enjoy-meant", turning instead towards "minimal difference" and adding that, "when we subtract from a symbolic field all the wealth of its differences... we touch the Lacanian Real".

### 1.7. Language must be stopped:

Žižek's (BWL: [sp]) assertion of the inviolability of Beckett's asceticism provides a touchstone towards which the enclosed discussions on the impossibility of emptying language, of stopping the constant going on, can direct its excessive plodding.



"...And more and more my own language appears to me like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it. Grammar and style. To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Victorian bathing suit or the imperturbability of a true gentleman. A mask. Let us hope the time will come...when language is most efficiently used where it is being most efficiently misused. As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute".

(Excerpt of a letter from Samuel Beckett to Axel Kaun, cited by Badiou 2005: viii).

9. The importance of emphasizing failure as a structural feature, rather than an anomaly or accident to be disregarded by a theory of speech acts (as Austin does in *How to do things with words*, in the case of performatives that are spoken in jest, or read by an actor on a stage), is, as Derrida (1972: 18) explains, the effective disregard for intention that such a restructuring entails. Though there may be evidence to the contrary, when it comes to language, it is helpful to see intention as a backseat driver. It is also important to note however, that as much as we are using and being used by language (language prevents us from being nothing) (Beckett 1985: 370), in no way does this alter the severity of our responsibility as free and autonomous agents/subjects. Our responsibility is instead all the more severe, since we can no longer rely on the excuse provided by our intention ('I did not mean for it to turn out like this...', 'this was not my intention...' etc.) (see Žižek 2008: 225).

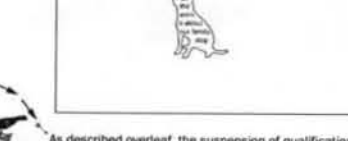
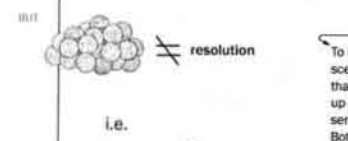
Samuel Beckett; Elizabeth Roudinesco; giving and receiving; Alain Badiou; language (is not a superstructure); language (as performative); Jacques Derrida; intention; language (as excess); fort-da



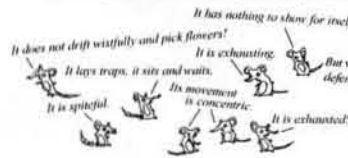
## ART AS AN EXERCISE IN PROBLEM SOLVING

In March 2009, Anja de Klerk and I collaborated on a conversational project titled *Art as a solution*; an exercise in problem solving, as part of the exhibition *Sometimes I forget that you exist at Blank Projects*. Initiated by the coincidence of our interest in object relations, the project attempted to use conversation as a medium and art as an exercise in problem solving.

Much of the following section draws on the results garnered from a series of (failed) tests that were performed within the space of the gallery.



As described overleaf, the suspension of qualification that occurs through the use of "confusion as the question" is the primary function of productive confusion. Through its implementation as a research strategy it operates as a temporary container and allows for the collection of disparate and dissimilar content, the only criterion for inclusion being coincidence. The content that is described here, these uncertain and taciturn things (images, texts, words, objects, ideas, substances etc. that suspend their signification) appear without explanation and are all the more seductive in their opacity. As stated earlier, such content is necessarily indefensible, the suspension of qualification operates in its defense.



Looking at a pot, for example, or thinking of a pot, as one of the artist's pots, or one of the artist's pots, it was in vain that I said: Pot, pot. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one would say: Pot, pot, said for something.

Encompassing both the process of making and/or compiling/conglomerating as well as the affect generated by the made object, the explication of art as an exercise in problem solving is an attempt to understand the dynamics of creative production as well as how the production of art objects operates in relation to language and desire.

To a large extent, this section is also implicated in a tangled attempt to inscribe creative production (as that which I do and would like to relate to as an elected duty - that which "can" go on...must go on...[will] go on") (Beckett 1958: 414) with a sense of compulsion. Specifically, a sense of compulsion that does not pander to the idea of meaningful production or meaningful existence (without relying on the signifier to signify or be significant). As such, the problem of art as an exercise in problem solving is a practical instance version of the problem of purpose/duty/meaning etc. The later explanation of solution vs. resolution (where the solution takes precedence over resolution) thus applies to this overarching problem as well. (Herein resides the difference between art as an exercise in problem solving and the idea of "practice led research" though they are similar, art as an exercise in problem solving does not entertain the idea of solutions as "little victories") (Morton 2005: 206).

To begin with, art as an exercise in problem solving describes a process that is analogous to the following scenario: as so often happens in the attempt to retrieve or fetch something specific, you forget what it was that you wanted and what accompanies you on your return is something completely different. After getting up and leaving the room, the idea of the object that you intended to fetch disappears. Confronted with a series of other things, you pick something else up instead and bring it back with you. Both the moment of confrontation, where the idea (as an index of the unknown, following Kant in Žižek (1994: 150) of the initial object is lost but the desire to fetch something is still in operation, as well as the process whereby a series of other things are evaluated and something else (that will simply have to do) is selected instead, correspond to the drive that compels the production of things.

The object within this analogy, the thing that you pick up instead, is the object of art as an exercise in problem solving. Despite the fact that it is not the thing (the original object that has disappeared) this other thing lures you and solicits your desire, it offers itself to you as something that is both palatable and palatable (that has all the affect of something tangible but is not necessarily so) so you snatch it up and carry it back with you. It is precisely this moment, the moment when the original object (the thing that made you get up) is obscured by an array of alternatives, that art as an exercise in problem solving seeks to reenact, effectively, the moment when the original object becomes the other thing.

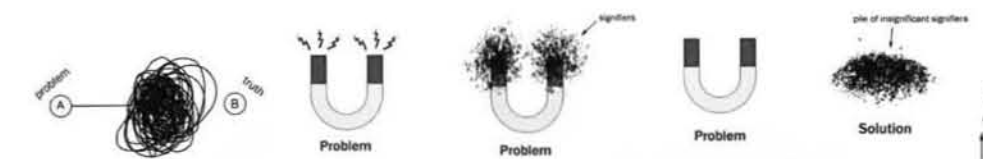
As much as the practice that emanates from productive confusion is open and inclusive it is also stubbornly opposed to the inclusion (or even the entertainment) of that which threatens to coagulate its contents into something solid. In the words of Francis Picabia (2003: 145):

*"I applaud all ideas, but nothing else, only the ideas interest me...profiting from ideas disgusts me"*

In this way, rather than passive and spongy, productive confusion is remorselessly belligerent. Its activity is however geared towards defense and relies therefore on a series of complimentary processes for the collection and generation of its content, the following section details such a process.

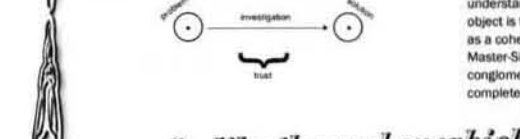
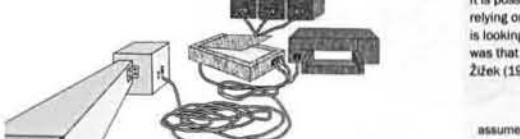
It gets what it asks for and nothing else!

art as an exercise in problem solving; exhaustion; Francis Picabia; Samuel Beckett; pot-pot; Anja de Klerk; art as a solution (exhibition); scansion; zigzag; circular performance; research; hesitation



This moment is repeated throughout the process of the attempt to produce something, to make a work (and to make the work work). While the term 'object' is used literally in the analogy above, the 'object' (as in the object of one's affection) or the object of an investigation (which refers to that which is under investigation as well as that which is posited as the goal of the investigation). As such, art as an exercise in problem solving compels an aimless and unrelenting (sometimes frantic, sometimes slow and indulgent, often forced) collection of palpable/palatable things: words, phrases, images, concepts, quotes, texts, objects, thoughts, ideas, bits of other things, things that are suspended, separable and absorbable.

An instrument of art as an exercise in problem solving: spirit voice drive/haunted object trap collector after Mike Kelley's Spirit collector, 1978.



*"...like the amber which holds the fly so as to know nothing of its flight"*

Mike Kelley; animals (dog); master signifier; missing piece; like the amber which holds the fly to show nothing of its flight; Jacques Lacan

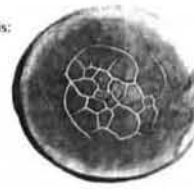


The answer is a resounding **no**. This dilemma is avoided by asserting that the work itself is not a string of happily coexisting signifiers that signify something *particular* and *significant*. The work itself *is* a thing, a letter, a signifier, it too is suspended. Furthermore, the work as a signifier is both the solution and the problem that art as an exercise in problem solving attempts to access; as much as the term:

**homeless object\***

is both palatable and palpable,

so too is this:



A septarian stone from Germany. From the collection of Roger Caillois. (Warner 2008: 38)

and this

**ladyfinger** • a small banana

(SACOO 2002: See 'ladyfinger'.)

and these:



\* As described in Alexis Meinong's theory of objects, **homeless objects** are those that:

- a) Cannot exist, (e.g. a round square);
- b) Could but do not exist, (e.g. a golden mountain);
- c) Do not exist at all.

and those →

(9)

homeless objects; things that are round (arguments); stones; dead ends; Alexis Meinong; states of being (hyperperceptive)



Mike Kelley, *Brown is the colour of my true love's soul*, 1992. 2 parts: wood and photograph. (Weichman, Graw & Vidler 2002: 36).



Kenneth Libbey's, 2008, *Hidden Column snowflake* captured with a specially designed photomicroscope (from 'snowflakes that fell to earth in Northern Ontario, Alaska, Vermont, Michigan and the Sierra Nevada mountain of California'). (Wetherin 2008: 63).



Anja de Klerk, 2008, *Bales, (one of five)*. Cheese dorian, ramification, spa. (artist's photograph).



Film still from *Did I-I-S-O-R-E*, 1997. (Dir. Johan Grimsberg).



moon/piece-rock/tuber - title pending  
crescent, paint tub and spray paint



Sunday sculpture #2 (22/02/2009): Flowers, oak tree, fallen branch, long grass, sheep and lambs.



object - title pending  
Balsa wood, enamel, dried flowers and painted plastic grass.



Pádraig Timoney, *Just a nose*, 1998. Stick, wood, glasspaper rose. 30x14x14cm (Eakins 2007: 204).



object - title pending  
Concrete, paint, steel.



Film still from *Imia* presentation, 2009.



flyer handle from *Get it on*, 2009. Paper.



Film still from *Twin Peaks: Fire walk with me* (dir. David Lynch).

(10)

twin peaks; Anja de Klerk; Mike Kelley; David Lynch; sunday sculptures; Pádraig Timoney; twin peaks (red room)

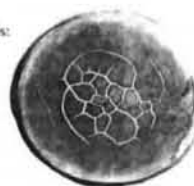


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*homeless object\**

is both palatable and palpable,

so too is this:



A septarian stone from Germany. From the collection of Roger Caillols. (Warner 2008: 38)

and this

*ladyfinger* • a small banana.

(SACCO 2002: 96; 'ladyfinger'.)

and these:



\* As described in Alexis Meinong's theory of objects, *homeless objects* are those that:

- a) Cannot exist, e.g. a round square;
- b) Could but do not exist, e.g. a golden mountain;
- c) Do not exist at all.

and those →

(9)

homeless objects; things that are round (arguments); stones; dead ends; Alexis Meinong; states of being (hyperperceptive)



Mike Kelley. *Brown is the colour of my true love's soul*. 1992. 2 parts: wood and photograph. (Weichman, Graw & Vidler 2002: 36).



Kenneth Libbrecht. 2008. *Hollow Column snowflake* captured with a specially designed photomicroscope (from 'snowflakes that fell to earth in Northern Ontario, Alaska, Vermont, Michigan and the Sierra Nevada mountains of California').

(Weichman 2008: 63).



Anja de Klerk. 2008. *Robot*, (one of five). Cheese dorian, examination, apt. (artist's photograph).



Film still from *Real H-S-O-R-E*. (1997). (Dir. Johan Grimonpat).



wood/spare-rod/tuber - title pending  
crescent, paint tub and epoxy paint



Sunday sculpture #2 (22/02/2009): Flowers, oak tree, fallen branch, long grass, sheep and lambs.



object - title pending  
Balsa wood, enamel, dried flowers and painted plastic goat.



Pádraig Timoney. *Just a rose*, 1998. Sock, wood, glasspaper vase. 30x14x14cm (Lichter 2007: 266)



object - title pending  
Cement, paint, steel



Film still from *Joan presentation*, 2009.



Byer handle from *Get it on*. 2009. Paper



Film still from *Twin Peaks: Fire walk with me* (dir. David Lynch)

(10)

twin peaks; Anja de Klerk; Mike Kelley; David Lynch; sunday sculptures; Pádraig Timoney; twin peaks (red room)

⑥ **Suspended object, complete with missing parts/“Total object, complete with missing parts, instead of partial object...question of degree” (Beckett 1965: 103)/partial object suspended with missing parts/missing parts with suspended object:**

Incidentally, the object of art as an exercise in problem solving attempts to transmit that which cannot be said. “It” (ça) thinks in a place where it is impossible to say ‘I am’ (Lemaire 1977: 38).

In her chronicle of Lacan’s life and system of thought, Elizabeth Roudinesco (1997: 358-370) describes the last decade of Lacan’s life and teaching as characterized by “a great Mallarméan longing to reach the essence of things” (359). “This mustering of forces”, Roudinesco continues, “adopted two modes of formalization: the *mathème* and the Borromean knot”. Lacan’s development of the *mathème*\* effectively enabled Lacanian psychoanalysis to be taught in a university context (for a large part of his career Lacan was confronted with the problem of how to transmit or teach his excessively complicated theories outside the discourse of psychoanalysis). The *mathèmes* were, in part, a revised attempt to overcome this problem without sacrificing the suggestion of an irresolvable residue (361). At the same time, Lacan was becoming increasingly interested in Borromean knots and other topological figures.\*

Along with a group of young mathematicians that he had assembled around him, Lacan attempted to resolve the “great *casse-tête*” of the topology of the unconscious. As Roudinesco (367) recounts, the correspondence amassed by the Lacan and the “inhabitants of the planet Borromeo” suggests

a veritable epic made up of suffering and melancholy, in which everyone involved exhausted themselves in the attempt to solve the riddle of the unconscious by means of telegrams, pneumatiques, and ordinary letters. Often after spending hours drawing surfaces, twisting inner tubes that they had delivered in large quantities, or filling baskets with bits of string and cutouts of coloured paper, the others would get a message from Lacan asking them for the solution of a problem. Neither they nor he could find it, and the search went on. “I’m going crazy,” he would say. “Do please phone or come and see me”.

Along with the narration of several other anecdotes (Lacan drawing and redrawing the knots at the dinner table, sleepless nights spent writing pages of “words and drawings jumbled together” (382), arriving to speak at seminars and simply drawing the knots on the board without a word etc.) Roudinesco (359) explains that Lacan’s “entry into the world of knots led him to the destruction of what the *mathème* claimed to build...thinking he was going to be able to reach the fundamental core of thought, Lacan devoted himself so passionately to the geometry of knots, braids, tori, and bits of string that he himself finally dissolved into the silent stupor of a Nietzschean aphasia”.

Nevertheless the combination of the *mathème* and the topological investigations led Lacan to rework both his teaching and his practice of psychoanalysis. Lacan’s transformation relied on a “pass from saying to showing...to induce every member of the audience – as well as himself – to carry out operations relating no longer to discourse but to “monstration”” (Roudinesco 363-366).<sup>+</sup> As monstration took over “Lacan came to use proportionally fewer and fewer words: he would rather draw than write, and then, when he could no longer either draw or speak, he played with rings like a child”.

Aside from the poetics of a “Nietzschean aphasia” what is worth taking from Roudinesco’s dissolving Lacan of the *mathèmes* and knots, is the idea of transmitting that which cannot be said through a “showing”. The great *casse-tête* that Lacan had attempted to solve was the whole truth, the impossible – and whether the project was successful in the end or not, the knots represented a complete and total object (complete with missing parts).

\* The *mathème* denotes the configuration of the unconscious through the use of algebraic schemas thus enabling a “writing of that which cannot be said, but can be transmitted”. The term borrows from Claude Lévi-Strauss’s “*mythème*” and “*mathéma*”, the Greek term for knowledge. Lacan initially associated the term with a form of madness known as Cantor’s mania, which, when it cannot be seen to be caused by “objective persecution”, “is linked to mathematical incomprehension itself, i.e. the resistance aroused by knowledge that appears incomprehensible” (Roudinesco 1997: 360).



♥ The Borromean knot (pictured above) is taken from the arms of the Borromeos, the Milanese dynasty. Its topology is such that if one link is broken, the entire knot falls apart. The definition of topology that is relevant here is the “way in which constituent parts are interrelated or arranged” (SACOD 2002: 5v ‘topology’).

+ Monstration – from Latin *monstrare*, to show (SACOD 2002: 5v ‘monstration’).

♣ Which could in fact be seen as the ultimate end, where the “meaningless voice which prevents you from being nothing and nowhere” finally relents (Beckett 1958: 370).

(11)

partial object complete with missing parts; monstration; borromean knots; truth (speaking for itself); third; topology; Jacques Lacan; Elizabeth Roudinesco; anxiety; crack

**“You can, because, you must”**

(the Kantian imperative), (Žižek 2003[sp]).

Though I am unfortunately neither a genius nor an aphasiac,<sup>+</sup> and cannot stop at the point of a total and complete object (at truth) it is possible nonetheless to posit the ‘solution’ offered by art as an exercise in problem solving as an instance of such a ‘showing’.

It is important to contrast the ‘solution’ offered here with the resolution offered by the original/resolved object. In its appearance and presentation as something resolved, the original object has recourse to what Žižek (2008: 224-5), following Lacan, describes as ‘the perspective of the last judgement’, “the idea that somewhere...there must be a standard which allows us to take a measure of our acts and pronounce their ‘true meaning’”. What is thrown out with the original object is precisely this promise of “true meaning”, of intentionality (where ‘understanding’ relies on the proper transfer or reading of the producer’s intention). With the loss of signification (the meaning of that which one does/the object as a resolved, cathartic product of meaningful production) we effectively renounce the “secret treasure in ourselves, the agalma that confers on us our innermost dignity – all those things so dear to personalism”.

Consequently, “we have to undergo the conversion of this treasure into a ‘piece of shit’, into a stinking excrement, and identify with it” (Žižek 1994: 168). It is this that the suspended object attempts to show up – that while it may appear to be a significant collection of different things, composed in such a way that it means *something*, it is, in effect, a piece of shit. The trick then, is to believe in the value of this piece of shit and to write up a thesis in its defense, to assume the production of shit as one’s duty.<sup>\*</sup>

I can tell you this much, ‘it ain’t easy’



♣ (or a borderline patient for whom, as Julia Kristeva notes, “sense does not emerge out of non-sense, metaphorical or witty though it might be”) (1982: 50)

\* See note 9, section 1 on intentionality and duty.

♣ Mike Kelley, 1991-2. Pollah joke (from The John Reed Club). Synthetic polymer on paper, 152 x 115 cm. (Sussman 1993: 9)

(12)

positions (aphasic); positions (genius); the perspective of the last judgement; Mike Kelley; dead ends; excremental kernel; body (excrement); shit; Slavoj Žižek; Julia Kristeva; states of being (coprophagous); positions (analysand); states of being (definitely empty)



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"It's all shit, but from now on we want  
to shit in different colors  
so as to adorn the eye of art with all  
the flags of all the consultants."



Candidate: Francis Burger

Supervisor: Fritha Langerman

Respondent: Ryna Malherbe

\* (Tristan Tzara quoted in Demos 2003: 147)

shit; Tristan Tzara; body (excrement)

**REMAINS**

**I GIVE YOU MY WORD**

House there  
no way to put into  
language, a language  
pages like this one.

production confusion  
the thing the address is missing  
the thing the address is missing

**A NEW WAY OF HAVING BEING**

1. something  
2. something  
3. something  
4. something  
5. something  
6. something  
7. something  
8. something  
9. something  
10. something  
11. something  
12. something  
13. something  
14. something  
15. something  
16. something  
17. something  
18. something  
19. something  
20. something

**I always**  
**the t**

**I AM AGAINST HAVING TO EXPLAIN MYSELF.**

100 (An acknowledgment of) Lack of need for explanation in art provides anxiety.  
101 (An acknowledgment of) The sense of shutting down meaning production.  
102 (An acknowledgment of) Refusal to speak clearly or speak at all as a powerful artistic position.  
103 (An acknowledgment of) The much resistance leads to collapse.

**I REFUSE TO LIE OR PRETEND.**

104 (An acknowledgment of) Being forced to articulate even when there is nothing to articulate.  
105 (An acknowledgment of) Art as a hobby.  
106 (An acknowledgment of) Making things that nobody is interested in.  
107 (An acknowledgment of) Refusal to be told up that you could never know the next step.  
108 (An acknowledgment of) Refusal to know the difference between lying and not lying.  
109 (An acknowledgment of) Refusal to "do something" versus "what am I doing".

**I ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH.**

110 (An acknowledgment of) Artists are earnest and artists tell the truth.  
111 (An acknowledgment of) A non essential and profound truth.  
112 (An acknowledgment of) Bad lies.  
113 (An acknowledgment of) Worsening of an idea.

**THE TRUTH DOES NOT SPEAK THROUGH ME.**

114 (An acknowledgment of) "I cannot do anything else".  
115 (An acknowledgment of) Truth is not a thing.  
116 (An acknowledgment of) Empire of signs (being held in its truth).  
117 (An acknowledgment of) Notions of appropriation have gotten cloudy and indistinct.

**leftovers; truth (speaking for itself); states of being (dynamic)**

**Alain Badiou - 15 Theses**

1. Art is not the sublime descent of the artist into the life of the body and the world. It is the production of an infinite multiplicity through the finite means of a material substratum.

2. Art cannot merely be the expression of a particularity (the artist or personal). Art is the impersonal production of a truth that is addressed to everyone.

3. Art is the process of a truth, and this truth is always the truth of the sensible or material, the truth of the body.

4. There is necessarily a plurality of arts, and however we may imagine the work in which the arts might intersect there is no integrable way of relating this plurality.

5. Every art develops from an initial form, and the progressive purification of this initial form discloses the history both of a particular artistic truth and of the substratum.

6. The subject of an artistic truth is the set of the works which compose it.

7. This composition is an infinite configuration, which, in our own contemporary artistic context, is a generic identity.

8. The real of art is itself infinitely concerned through the movement process of its purification. In other words, the real material of art is determined by the contingent production of a form. Art is the secondary formalization of the advent of a truth's generic form.

9. The only reason of contemporary art is not to be impeded. This also means it does not have to be dominated. If contemporary art is concerned with the material form of public life.

10. Most important art is necessarily abstract art, in this sense: it abstracts itself from all particularity, and formalizes the generic form of abstraction.

11. The abstraction of non-impedimental art is not concerned with any particular public or audience. Non-impedimental art is related to a kind of anonymous-problematic effect. Here, it does what it says, without distinguishing between kinds of people.

12. Nonimpedimental art must be as rigorous as a mathematical demonstration, as something as or more so in the right, and as something as a lie.

13. Art can only be made from the starting point of what which, as far as Empire is concerned, doesn't exist. Through this abstraction, art renders this invisible visible. This is what governs the formal principle of every art: the effort to render visible to everyone that which for Empire (and so by extension for everyone, though from a different point of view) doesn't exist.

14. Since it is sure of its ability to control the entire domain of the visible and the audible via the laws governing conventional circulation and democratic communication, Empire no longer conceals anything, at all, and all thought is reduced when we accept this permission to perceive to commonplace and to enjoy the world as the present territory of Empire.

15. The artist is to do nothing that to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible what is already recognized as existent.

**s speak**  
**ruth.**

**PLEASE CUT OFF MY LEG**

**Proximity vs. sense (coherence vs honesty)**  
**Container vs content**

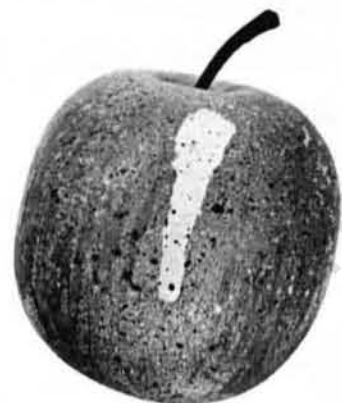


*announcements to the  
universe; architecture  
(podium); something to  
believe in; space-time (smooth)*

(Left) balsa wood, paper and  
enamel.

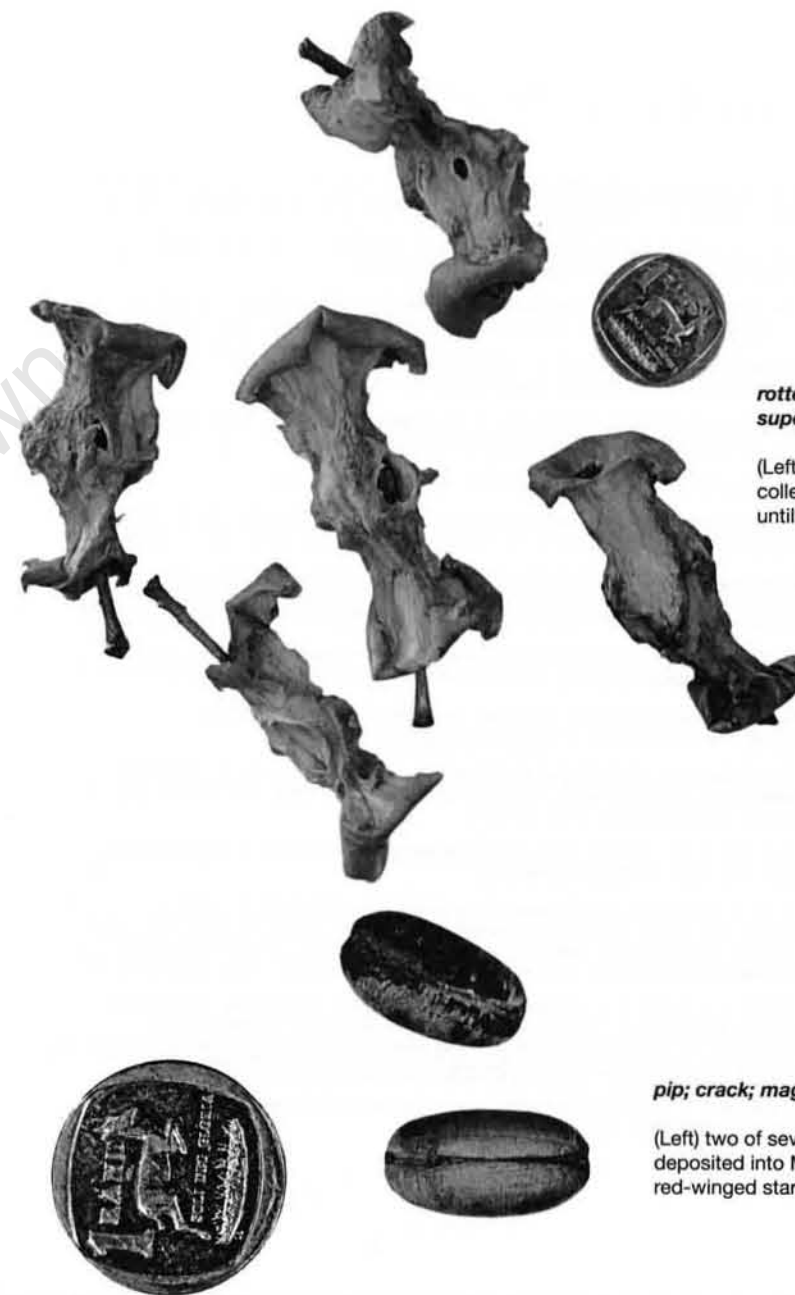
*food (apple); truth; things that  
are round (swollen)*

(Right) balsa wood, enamel and  
spray paint with apple stem.



B.B.78. (top)  
B.B.82. (bottom)

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*rotten nature; food (apple);  
superstition; truth*

(Left) apple cores  
collected from 04, 2009  
until January 2010.

*pip; crack; magic*

(Left) two of several pips  
deposited into Michaelis studio by  
red-winged starlings.

(top) B.B.93.1.  
(bottom) B.A.29.1.

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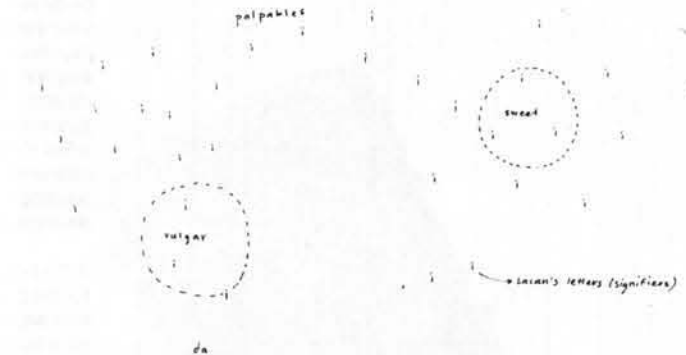


## Alain Badiou - 15 theses

1. Art is not the sublime descent of the infinite into the finite abjection of the body and sexuality. It is the production of an infinite subjective series through the finite means of a material subtraction. ✓
2. Art cannot merely be the expression of a particularity (be it ethnic or personal). Art is the impersonal production of a truth that is addressed to everyone. ✓✓
3. Art is the process of a truth, and this truth is always the truth of the sensible or sensual, the sensible as sensible. This means: the transformation of the sensible into a happening of the Idea. ✓✓
4. There is necessarily a plurality of arts, and however we may imagine the ways in which the arts might intersect there is no imaginable way of totalizing this plurality. ✓✓
5. Every art develops from an impure form, and the progressive purification of this impurity shapes the history both of a particular artistic truth and of its exhaustion. ✓✓
6. The subject of an artistic truth is the set of the works which compose it. ✓✓
7. This composition is an infinite configuration, which, in our own contemporary artistic context, is a generic totality. ✓✓
8. The real of art is ideal impurity conceived through the immanent process of its purification. In other words, the raw material of art is determined by the contingent inception of a form. Art is the secondary formalization of the advent of a hitherto formless form. ✓✓
9. The only maxim of contemporary art is not to be imperial. This also means: it does not have to be democratic, if democracy implies conformity with the imperial idea of political liberty. ✓✓
10. Non-imperial art is necessarily abstract art, in this sense: it abstracts itself from all particularity, and formalizes this gesture of abstraction. ✓✓
11. The abstraction of non-imperial art is not concerned with any particular public or audience. Non-imperial art is related to a kind of aristocratic-proletarian ethic: Alone, it does what it says, without distinguishing between kinds of people. ✓✓
12. Non-imperial art must be as rigorous as a mathematical demonstration, as surprising as an ambush in the night, and as elevated as a star. ✓✓
13. Today art can only be made from the starting point of that which, as far as Empire is concerned, doesn't exist. Through its abstraction, art renders this inexistence visible. This is what governs the formal principle of every art: the effort to render visible to everyone that which for Empire (and so by extension for everyone, though from a different point of view), doesn't exist. ✓✓
14. Since it is sure of its ability to control the entire domain of the visible and the audible via the laws governing commercial circulation and democratic communication, Empire no longer censures anything. All art, and all thought, is ruined when we accept this permission to consume, to communicate and to enjoy. We should become the pitiless censors of ourselves. ✓✓
15. It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent. ✓✓

Alain Badiou; direction; announcements to the universe; truth; monstration; abstraction; fulguration; architecture (empire); the cost of action

Alain Badiou's Fifteen theses on contemporary art.

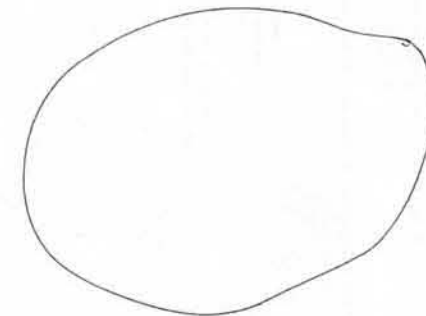


states of being (hyperceptive); suspended signifier; pricks

(Above) diagram showing a potential state of being (where one could encounter an object in a heightened state of perception with recourse to every proprioceptive faculty all at once).

personal process history

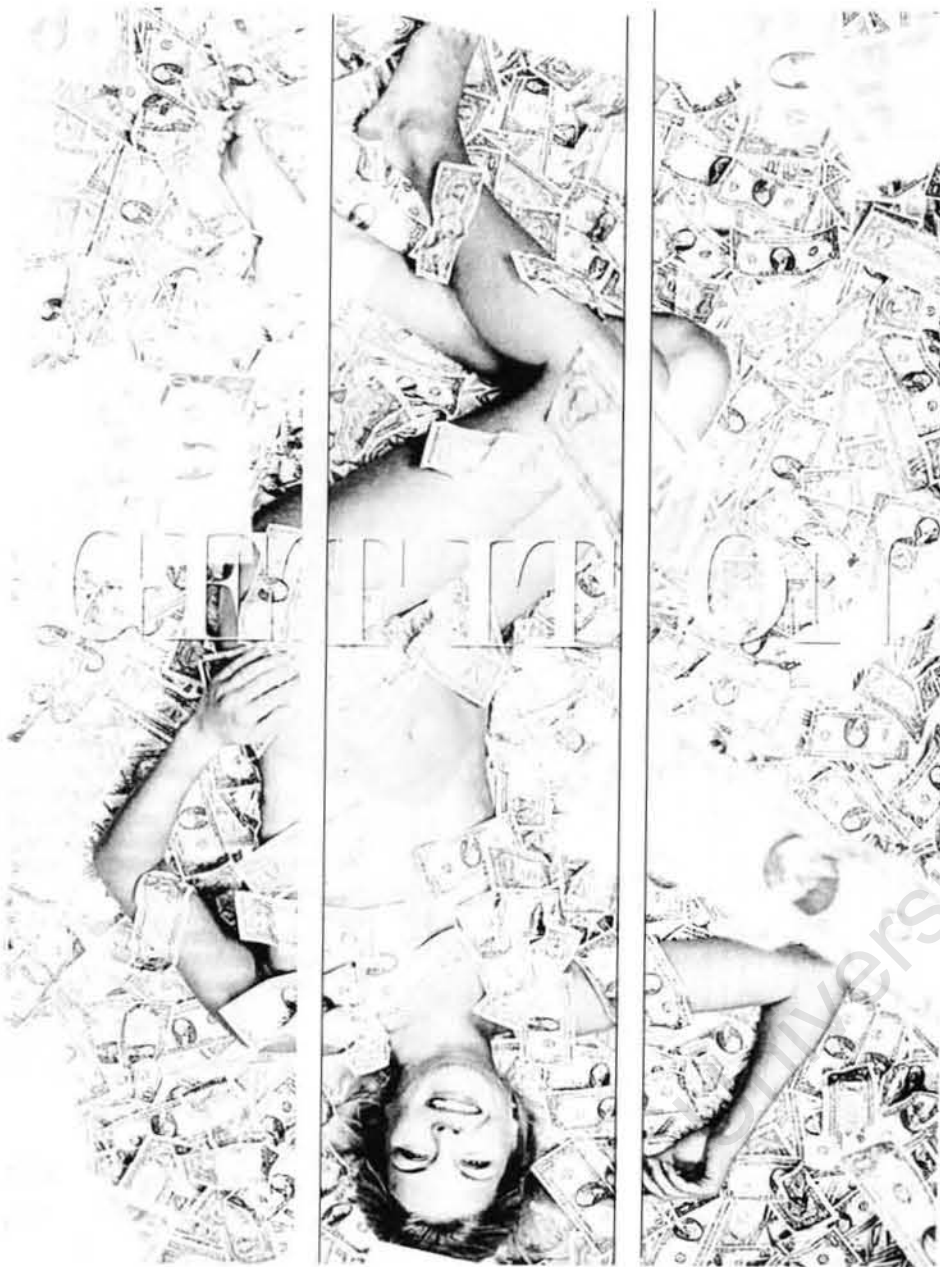
giving + receiving



process; giving and receiving; things that are roundish

(Immediately above) diagram showing personal process history.





money; propaganda; announcements to the universe; public performance

(Above and following page) flyers distributed at the Johannesburg Art Fair. (Additional keywords listed below illustration of reverse sides).

## SEVEN SUNDAYS OF NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

A new commission by the Johannesburg Art Fair, 2005. The flyer is a collage of images and text, including a photograph of a person's face and a list of names: "SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, ANDREA FRASER, MAO TSE TUNG, MICHAEL TAUSSIG, MBONGENI NGEMA, JOHN MILLER, JAN VERWOERT, POSTMODERNISM".

Andrea Fraser: I don't think art has any more of a capacity to produce radical change than any other sphere of human activity. I do believe that art can and should be a site of reflection and resistance, critique and contestation, and realize the potential of its historical development as a relatively autonomous field. At this point, however, art doesn't even seem capable of defending that autonomy, much less taking on society, except in its own rights of fancy. And that's where belief tends to come into play, sustaining the fantasies of creative omnipotence—including the power to change the world, despite all evidence to the contrary—with which artists foster themselves and their patrons. If reason is unconscious, its logic is wish fulfillment but only in fantasy. The perennial promise of art is to turn those fantasies into reality. The problem, unfortunately, is that enacting one's fantasies is not the same thing as fulfilling the wishes that drive them. Enactment tends to reproduce the very alienation and frustration that engendered those wishes in the first place.

There is one area where the art world has been extremely successful in turning fantasy into reality. That is in producing value. If there's one thing we can do effectively in the "real world," it's turn shit into gold. The fundamental basis for the entire economy of art is belief. Belief in the value of art and belief in the value of specific objects as art. There's really no other basis for the art market. I don't know that it can be completely divorced from metaphysical belief. Do the people who spend millions of dollars on a painting really believe in art? Is it only market value? It's easy to say that, but I don't believe it.

Greg Bordowitz: Because it's not...

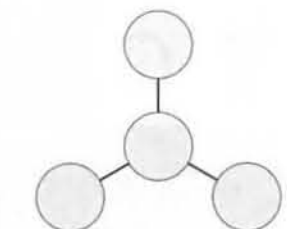
AF: Because I don't want to, probably. A lot of collectors of contemporary art consider their expenditures proof of their belief in art precisely because there is no guarantee of economic value. On the other hand, when people are buying shares of paintings that they will never have in their home, it is hard to imagine that anything more than market value is at stake for them. But I do think this is a fundamental issue, often sidestepped with avant-garde posturing that blames our supporters for supporting us for the wrong reasons. Well, then, let's make it the right reasons, whatever we think they are. We do have agency in that, and I agree with Greg in that I want art to remain a space where those questions are asked.

Andrea A. Bordowitz, G. Fraser, A. Miller, J. Verwoert, 2005. The artist is a currency. in *Grey Room* no. 24, Summer 2005, pp. 124-5.

Trish, Trish, Trish. Come outside I have something to show you. Oh my god what is it. This is the excessive excremental kernel of your being. I hate it, take it away.



It's not all about money. Is it all about money?



—It's not all about money. Is it all about money?  
—No! (Yes, it is).  
—Huang! Who cares, rabble rabble rabble. It's the tie.  
Language is universal, and all we have to give is our Word!

—Let's get stupid  
—It will not do!  
—You must investigate!  
—You must not speak nonsense!  
—We must be wary, it's been invaded!  
—Let's draw all of our children.

LET'S MAKE IT RIGHT!

—What we should be doing is thinking of ways to produce difference. But how? Maintain a position? I feel like I'm going fucking crazy!  
—Too late! Stop it! Stop it! Norm is going to understand this. With good reason postmodernism has relentlessly instructed us that reality is artifice yet...not enough surprise has been expressed as to how we nevertheless get on with living, pretending—thanks to the mimetic faculty—that we live facts, not fictions?

—But no thanks to the mimetic faculty, maybe, but its not said correctly, "mimesis belongs to a different discourse" and I do not want to spend my life hunting for the ideal chair just like that, explain yourself?  
—We're not explaining it properly, like this for example, if we can believe in reality, it is not in such a way that anything other is positioned alongside, underneath, over and above it, it is there.

—Fantasy is on the side of reality?

— but what does language have to do with money?

—There is no such thing as money!

—Follow me  
—This is Douglas Hurler, when asked about his current projects, he replied that, at the moment, he was mostly playing tennis. Moreover, he confessed to feeling dejected after having discovered that his works could be bought and sold in the art market.

—But it's not the same, we do want to escape!  
—We are not pieces of paper, man! We are men!  
—But what exactly is the point? As much as I am inclined to sympathize with those who sell their soul I also realize that the bathwater should not be lost with the baby, the baby must go. GO baby GO GO.  
—Let's be serious about this. No-one is selling their soul.

—So what I believe!  
—Hmph, YOU can't even say that without babbling on about babies and bathwater, an ill disguised reference to your favourite philosopher that has no real place in this discussion.

—Just as well. Leave it right there. We are supposed to be fighting.

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

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—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

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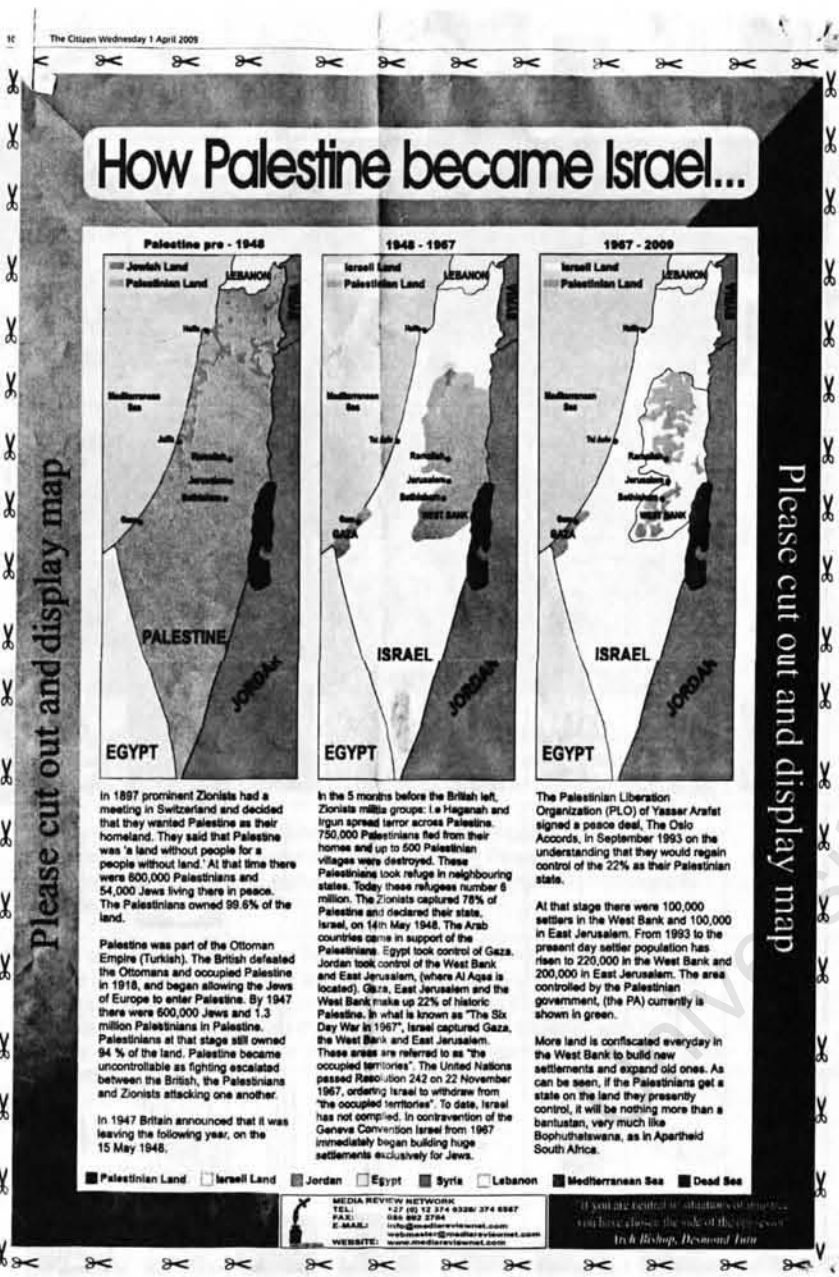
—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

—SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

excremental kernel; shit; Slavoj Žižek; Andrea Fraser; Mao Tse Tung; Michael Taussig; Mbongeni Ngema; John Miller; let's get stupid; language (word games); dead horse (beating); dead horse (riding); circular performance; failure; Jan Verwoert; postmodernism







propaganda; politics; concurrent events; positions (neighbour); violence

Poster printed in *The Citizen*, Wednesday 21 April, 2009.

"We should not take this statement as a tongue-in-cheek admission, but literally – that fateful April, while 'wandering in a field ... looking aimlessly for cowslips' the woman suffered some kind of collapse, possibly even her death – definitely not a real-life event, but an unbearably intense 'inner experience' close to what C.S. Lewis described in his *Surprised by Joy* as the moment of his religious choice. What makes this description so irresistibly delicious is the author's matter-of-fact 'English' skeptical style, far from the usual pathetic narratives of the mystical rapture – Lewis refers to the experience as the 'odd thing'; he mentions its common location – 'I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus' – the qualifications like 'in a sense', 'what now appears,' 'or, if you like,' 'you could argue that... but I am more inclined to think....,' 'perhaps,' 'I rather disliked the feeling'":

"The odd thing was that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice. In a sense. I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus. Without words and (I think) almost without images, a fact about myself was somehow presented to me. I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out. Or, if you like, that I was wearing some stiff clothing, like corsets, or even a suit of armor, as if I were a lobster. I felt myself being, there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armor or keep it on. Neither choice was presented as a duty; no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door or to take off the corset meant the incalculable. The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional. I was moved by no desires or fears. In a sense I was not moved by anything. I chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, 'I chose,' yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite. On the other hand, I was aware of no motives. You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when, instead of producing motives, he could only say, 'I am what I do.' Then came the repercussion on the imaginative level. I felt as if I were a man of snow at long last beginning to melt. The melting was starting in my back – drip-drip and presently trickle-trickle. I rather disliked the feeling".

In a way, everything is here: the decision is purely formal, ultimately a decision to decide, without a clear awareness of WHAT the subject decides about; it is non-psychological act, unemotional, with no motives, desires or fears; it is incalculable, not the outcome of strategic argumentation; it is a totally free act, although one couldn't do it otherwise. It is only AFTERWARDS that this pure act is 'subjectivized,' translated into a (rather unpleasant) psychological experience. From the Lacanian standpoint, there is only one aspect which is potentially problematic in Lewis' formulation: the traumatic Event (encounter of the Real, exposure to the 'minimal difference') has nothing to do with the mystical suspension of ties which bind us to ordinary reality, with attaining the bliss of radical indifference in which life or death and other worldly distinctions no longer matter, in which subject and object, thought and act, fully coincide. To put it in mystical terms, the Lacanian act is rather the exact opposite of this 'return to innocence': the Original Sin itself, the abyssal DISTURBANCE of the primeval Peace, the primordial 'pathological' Choice of the unconditional attachment to some singular object (like falling in love with a singular person which, thereafter, matters to us more than everything else). And does something like THIS not take place on the grass in [Beckett's] *Not I*? The sinful character of the trauma is indicated by the fact that the speaker feels punished by God. What then happens in the final shift of the play is that the speaker ACCEPTS the trauma in its meaninglessness, ceases to search for its meaning, restores its extra-symbolic dignity, as it were, thereby getting rid of the entire topic of sin and punishment.

Slavoj Žižek; Samuel Beckett; C.S. Lewis; intensity; states of being (hyperceptive); rotten nature; gentrification; meaninglessness; subjective destitution; positions (god); luck

Excerpt from Žižek (2009: sp) with quotations from C.S. Lewis' *Surprised by Joy* and in reference to Beckett's *Not I*.



# Lets get stupid

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND! DAMN YOU! YOU MUST UNDERSTAND! TRY AGAIN! TRY AGAIN! YOU WILL UNDERSTAND!

Tom morton - what we want isn't freedom, but a bigger tobacco allowance and more accommodating wardens (on cattelan)  
Vs. escape (how to escape and why we should - the politics of cynicism - in defense of lost causes)

Freedom (strawberry and chocolate cake) - cynicism as an disempowering mode of criticality.

I give you my word  
(there is no work, there can be no work)  
Using and being used by language (is it impossible to avoid conclusion/manufacturing the meaningful/sentiment (lenin's cat - life blood, blood sacrifice - white kittens, so that you can see them in the dark, drinking your blood), is it necessary:

How and why it should be sabotaged (sabotaging the construction in its construction or sabotaging the medium - why both is necessary - IT AIN'T EASY  
Not explaining yourself - not giving in to the appropriate medium - succumbing to self-depreciation (different to assuming a modest position)

Fighting the good fight (propaganda doesn't lie, belief + faith, believing in something, conviction - positions - modest but STRONG, the conviction to talk as if you were telling the truth (not the whole truth - modesty) but the truth nonetheless - you must not talk nonsense, you must investigate - mao tse tung)

TRUTH  
HONESTY (an honestly critical criticality)

Don Quixote and living by the Law (truth), fighting the good fight, living within language (the text as master, the importance of a master - group dynamics (roudinesco) master and slave vs master and apprentice)

Restructuring the logic of work + concept:  
Contingent thinking (the conversation as medium - art as a solution - problem solving - palpable/palatable objects, collecting palpable/palatable objects (possibility of pallable as a word?) desire to augment these objects to your work or collect them within your work - attach them to yourself, the missing piece, the object petit a, the lamella)

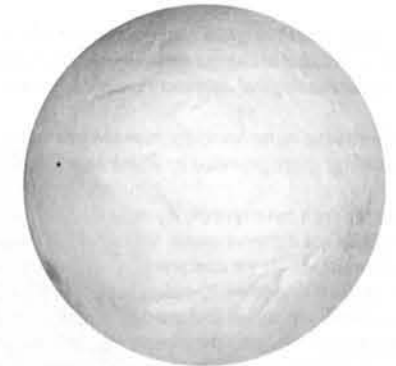
Universal babble - nonsense - mind mapping in the dark (constellation of thoughts/texts/objects)

Tom Morton; positions (institutionalised prisoner); positions (cowboy); freedom; language; body (blood); propaganda; truth; Don Quixote; body (appendage); states of being (dynamic); let's get stupid; Lenin's cat

Self-directed statements.

architecture (podium);  
announcements to the universe

(Immediately below)  
sanded pine block.



things that are round (sphere);  
pedagogy; craft (hobby)

(Above) polystyrene ball.

knife-holder; things that are  
roundish; things that  
pick you up

(Right) clay and  
wire object.



(top-left) B.B.71.3.  
(top-right) B.B.71.1.  
(bottom) B.A.42.6.

art as an exercise in problem solving; art as a solution (exhibition); Anja de Klerk; Trasi Henen; Douglas Gimberg; Blank Projects; experiment; twin peaks (Agent Cooper); Don Quixote; language (as the Law); pot-pot; Samuel Beckett; conversation; cacolydates; third; homeless objects; missing piece; Shel Silverstein; art as research

Proposal for Art as a solution, an exercise in problem solving as part of the group exhibition *Sometimes I forget that you exist* conceived by Trasi Henen and facilitated by Jonathon Garnham at Blank Projects, Cape Town (March 2009).

*Sometimes I forget that you exist; An exercise in problem solving (art as a solution).*

Anja de Klerk and Francis Burger;

Taking Trasi's original conversation with Douglas and I as our primary point of reference, Anja and myself have decided to engage in an ongoing collaborative process whereby we will each attempt to solve a unique phenomenological dilemma (loosely structured around the coincidence of our interest in object relations).

Borrowing metaphorically from the strategies of investigation employed by the Law, our investigation will use the working space provided by Blank as a base.<sup>1</sup>

As we each have specific agendas that we would like the investigation to follow, Anja and I will each be attempting to map out different routes, which will, in Anja's words, precipitate into a constellation of thoughts, ideas and connections. As we conceive, rationalize, complete and assess our our different tasks (the construction of a wooden trap used to capture homeless objects<sup>2</sup>, standardized testing of how a variety of pots respond to being designated as such<sup>3</sup>, the design and manufacture of protective clothing and detective devices that will aid our respective investigations, etc.) the process will be plotted out onto a chalkboard mounted within the gallery.<sup>4</sup> In order to further aid our investigation, we intend to employ the expertise of various individuals who will be invited to the space as consultants.

Although it is our hope that solutions will begin to pop up and impose themselves on the blindspots within our individual investigations, it is not our intention to direct this process towards the production of a specific work or object (a final solution). Conversation will therefore serve as our principal medium.

Ps. I have attached a pdf of Shel Silverstein's *The missing piece* for your interest.

1. Foucault will serve as a reference here, as well as Special Agent Cooper's investigation of the murder of Laura Palmer in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, and Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote*.

2. After Alexis Meinong, homeless objects are classed as objects that cannot exist, such as a round square.

3. A procedure inspired by Samuel Beckett's *Watt*.

4. Functioning as both a generative and documentary platform, the state of the board will be documented at different intervals throughout the duration of the exhibition.



*pip; art as an exercise in problem solving; reasonable and unreasonable combinations; assemblage; pricks; art as a solution (exhibition)*

Blue tack nail with apple seed.  
Assembled by Anja de Klerk.

DADDY  
YOU SCARE  
ME, DADDY  
PLEASE SCARE  
ME.



art as an exercise in problem solving; pot-pot; let's get stupid; daddy you scare me daddy please scare me; twin peaks (Agent Cooper); Rihanna; doctors; stoppages; voodoo; food (apple); truth; fight fight fight; states of being (dynamic); reasonable and unreasonable combinations; repetition; formless; art as a solution (exhibition)

Associated paraphernalia from *Art as a Solution, an exercise in problem solving*, Francis Burger and Anja de Klerk, 2009.



an exercise in problem solving - sja de Klerk and Francis Burger  
04/02/2009 - 21/02/2009



art as an exercise in problem solving; Anja de Klerk; giving and receiving; animals (rabbit); animals (ox); pricks; collaboration; conversation; art as a solution (exhibition); process; art as research

(Above and following pages) booklet produced in collaboration with Anja de Klerk as part of *Art as a solution* (Francis Burger and Anja de Klerk, 2009). Additional keywords are listed underneath illustrated page spreads. Footnotes (non-consecutive) refer within the booklet and appropriate sources are provided on the last illustrated page.

The point is not to tell the whole Truth but, precisely, to append to the (official) Whole the uneasy supplement which denounces its falsity.<sup>2</sup>

Se non è  
vero, è ben'  
trovato<sup>3</sup>



Don Quixote; accident; truth (speaking for itself); Slavoj Žižek; Jacques Lacan

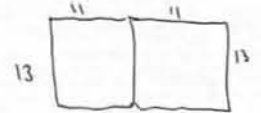
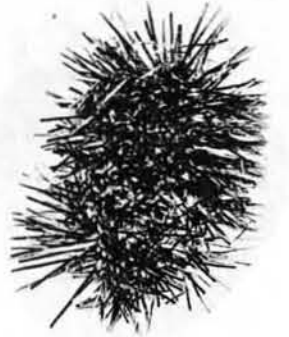
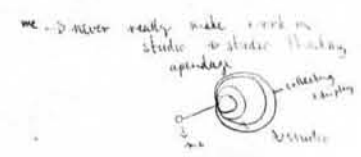
↑  
N



cape town  
(empire)

- really resist their own team
- work through article - blindspot
- failure
- objects as "appendages" → blindspot
- objects become hooks for desire
- (things and ourselves)

making space > studio  
thinking space > studio



anja. fran. bockic

architecture (empire); architecture (outback); tease; body (appendage); positions (outsider)  
conditions of making (making the conditions for making); process; architecture (exedra)



I will leave this  
 to you (the  
 student) to  
 think of  
 ...

art in faith  
 (need to believe in art)

obtained a certificate / diploma  
 (explained to me I had to study from someone  
 + think what I find interesting)

...

apparition → word

knowledge from education however  
 not very strong of some  
 knowledge / unknown push up against  
 each other (short - threshold)  
 too far  
 ...

research  
 re search

magic — creativity  
 (produce something)  
 contrary to logic

"sympathetic magic" → chain of signs  
 ...

writing questions → the  
 quiet. → And  
 ...

theory of abstraction art

phenomenology (hard to do)  
what art does  
philosophy, analysis

always Plato (For MS?)

aesthetics (cont)

phenomenology of art??

inaesthetics?  
what?

inaesthetics / I understand a relation of philosophy  
as that, investigating that is itself a product of  
my maker as claim to turn art into an object of  
theory, against aesthetic speculation, in aesthetics  
wishes the strictly interphenomenological effects produced  
the independent existence of the works of art.

the sounds nice but not really so.

process of them

storage object piece =

individual incoherencies?

272

If in 1960 Lacan cast Socrates as a psychoanalyst, it was because in his view Freudian discourse had become the only modern equivalent of the Socratic stage in philosophy, when the members of an elite gathered around a master against the backdrop of a golden age, a Republic of letters.

*Patricia Highsmith; Elizabeth Roudinesco; Jacques Lacan; Dancer in the Dark; positions (neighbour); violence; architecture (gallery); voice; fetishism; dead horse; animals (horse)*



**Band "Running Around" - Kingston to Call**

Words and Music by Roy Orbison and Joe Melson

Just runnin' around, each place we go  
So afraid that he might show  
Yeah, runnin' around, what would I do  
If he came back and wanted you?

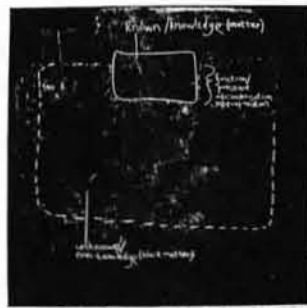
Just runnin' around, feeder love  
Runnin' around - You loved him so  
Just runnin' around, what he saw  
If he came back, which one would you choose?

That all of once he was standing there  
So sure of himself, his head in the air  
My heart was breaking, when one day it hit  
You turned around and walked away with me!

**Band "Running Around" - Kingston to Call**



16/03

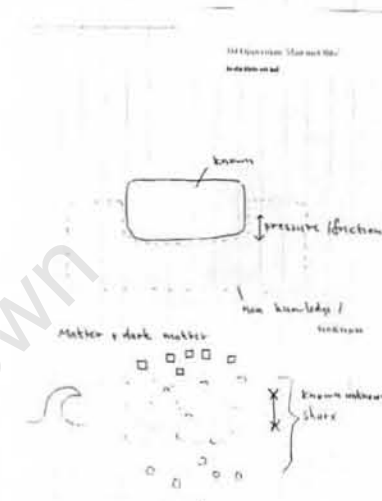


17/03



13/03

Roy Orbison; eccentric performance; giving and receiving; language (as performative); things that are round (arguments); science; known vs. unknown



Grrr

Not wanting to solve  
resistance to knowing.

Sometimes I forget that you exist

**Background information:**

The exhibition is an ongoing collection of progress that responds to the following:

The exhibition will take the form of a progress that responds to the following:

Desire is a state of potentiality. When the desired destination is reached, is this a tragedy? Dominant culture is a vicarious World as Idea and Representation between Desire and Ennui. The liminal space is where between.

Attached is a little map which our introductory PDF-booklet (a work in progress as well)

**Practicalities:**

Ant-action of developing potential  
nothing-minds exist everywhere

something ant comes  
nothing

laborative research project

of a presentation of works/strategies-involving dialectic: Hegel, Thoren, And then...

When the desired destination is reached, is this a tragedy? Dominant culture is a vicarious World as Idea and Representation between Desire and Ennui. The liminal space is where between.

Attached is a little map which our introductory PDF-booklet (a work in progress as well)

as solution from the blindspots (those things existing within problematic that cannot be seen.)

states of being (definitely full definitely empty); resistivity; desire; Georg W.F Hegel; Arthur Schopenhauer; known vs. unknown; zigzag; science



18/03

what is singing? Why do we sing? At the very beginning of *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin presents a scene of women singing as they pick strawberries in a field – with the acerbic explanation that they are ordered to sing by their mistress, so that they cannot eat the strawberries as they pick them.

mixtures, to that is, the *total dimension* of such a fetishist stance? Let us take another film which deals with music and the working class, Mark Herman's *Brassed Off*, where tropic is the relationship between a "real" political struggle (the miners' struggle against the threatened pit closure/legitimation in terms of technological progress) and the idealized symbolic expression of the miners' community, their playing in a brass band. At first, the two aspects seem to be opposed to the miners caught in their struggle for economic survival, the "Only music matters!" attitude of their old band leader dying of lung cancer looks like the vain fetishized insistence of the empty symbolic form deprived of its social substance. But as the film develops, their political struggle, however, is not the only one. Their attitude, their insisting to go on playing, their participating in a national competition, turns into a grand symbolic gesture, a proper act of asserting fidelity to their political struggle — as one of them puts it, when there's no hope, there are only principles to follow. . . . In short, the symbolic act occurs when we arrive at this intersection or, rather, short circuit of the two levels, so that insistence on the empty form itself (we'll continue to play in our brass band, whatever happens . . .) becomes the sign of fidelity to the content (to the struggle against the closure, for the continuation of the miners' way of life).

At this role of fate achieved its highest expression in the legendary event of the Vorkuta Gulag camp Mine 29 in 1953. A few months after Stalin's death, strikes broke out in labour camps all across Siberia; the strikers' demands were modest and "reasonable": the release of the very old and the very young, a ban on random shooting by watch-tower guards, and so on. One by one, the camps succumbed to threats or false promises from Moscow, and only Mine 29 at Vorkuta held out, surrounded by two divisions of NKVD troops, with tanks. When the troops finally entered the main gate, they saw the prisoners standing and singing. The strikers raised their arms lightly, singing. In the brief moment of hesitation, the heavy machine guns opened fire: the miners remained motionless and erect, defiantly continuing to sing, the dead held up by the living. After about a minute, reality prevailed, and corpses started to litter the ground. However, this brief minute in which the strikers' defiance seemed to suspend the very laws of nature, transubstantiating their exhausted bodies into the appearance of an immortal singing collective body, was an occurrence of the Sublime at its purest, the prolonged moment in which, in a way, time stood still.



choosing and (can use separate  
"buckets" from  
(rest) from

Tinsel suit  
Ann Hamiltons birthday  
suit



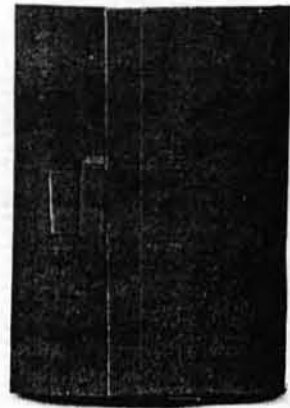
(Body objects → thinking with objects (bravilles) objet politique)?

as objects / ideas (with speaker's family meaning)  
unavailable → keeping (long meaning)  
discourse / speaking  
not in rel to this.

Acting

Ant-Desire

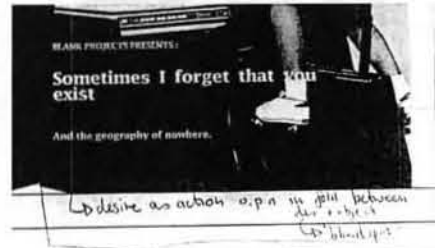
Handwritten notes in cursive script, mostly illegible due to fading.



wave; don't walk boogie; Vladimir I. Lenin; death; positions (the exhausted)



falling into holes



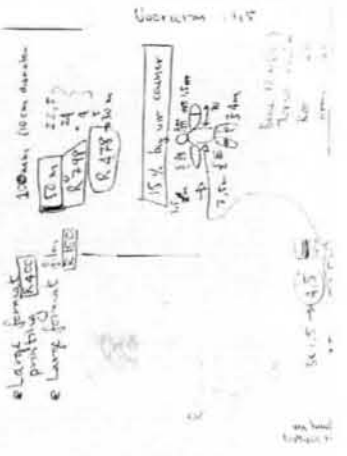
desire as author o.p.n in mid between  
desire & object  
the blind spot

big piece of wood (or metal) - 100 cm



Robert Filliou, Sans Objet

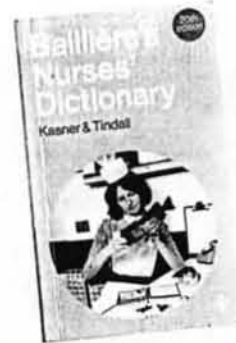
Robert Filliou, Sans Objet



missing piece; Shel Silverstein; holes; Robert Filliou; desire; direction



08/03



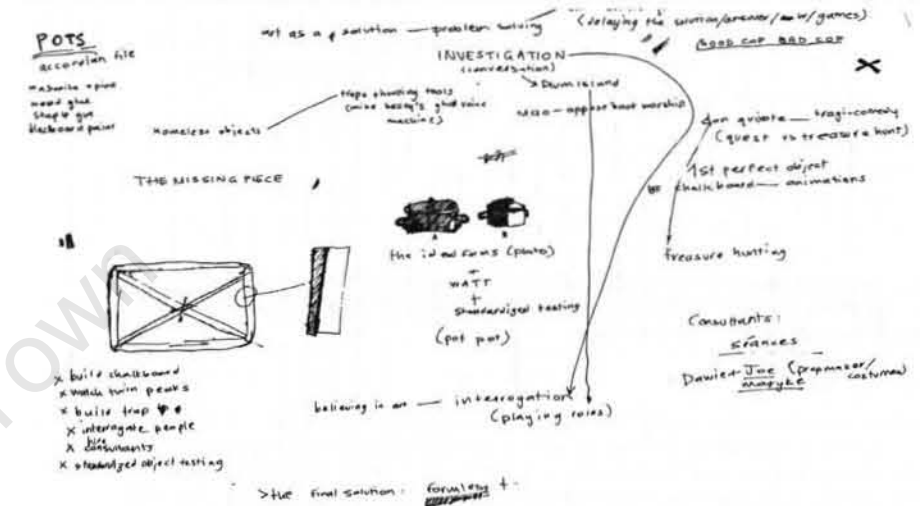
For Watt now found himself in the midst of things which, if they consented to be named, did so as it were with reluctance. And the state in which Watt found himself related formulation in a way no state had ever done, in which Watt had ever found himself, and Watt had found himself in a great many states, in his day. Looking at a pot, for example, or thinking of a pot, at one of Mr Knott's pots, of one of Mr Knott's pots, it was in vain that Watt said, Pot, pot. Well, perhaps not quite in vain, but very nearly. For it was not a pot, the more he looked, the more he reflected, the more he felt sure of that, that it was not a pot at all. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot, and be comforted. It was in vain that it answered, with unexceptionable adequacy, all the purposes, and performed all the offices, of a pot, it was not a pot. And it was just this hairbreadth departure from the nature of a true pot that so exasperated Watt. For if the approximation had been less close, then Watt would have been less anguished. For then he would not have said, This is a pot, and yet not a pot, no, but there he would have said, This is something of which I do not know the name. And Watt preferred on the whole having to do with things of which he did not know the name, though this too was painful to Watt, in having to do with things of which the known name, the proven name, was not the name, any more, for him. For he could always hope, of a thing of which he had never known

the name, that he would learn the name, some day, and so be tranquillised. But he could not look forward to this in the case of a thing of which the true name had ceased, suddenly, or gradually, to be the true name for Watt. For the pot remained a pot, Watt felt sure of that, for everyone but Watt. For Watt alone it was not a pot, any more.

Lenin's cat; propaganda; positions (hysteric); doctors; repetition; pot-pot; Samuel Beckett; reasonable and unreasonable combinations

art as an exercise in problem solving; zigzag; formless; Plato's ideal forms; pot-pot; magic; architecture (trap); Don Quixote; missing piece; something to believe in; eccentric performance

(Immediately below) own preparatory map/plan for Art as a solution (Anja de Klerk and Francis Burger, 2009)



Like a third year deconstruction student.

It is possible that this is exactly what is needed, when discussing poetics, there must be an attempt to be poetic, even if, in its naivety, it jars itself loose from the rest of the text and stands out as something that is obviously false, it does imply an amount of conviction. Writing itself is embarrassing.

What will you do when this is all over?

writing as embarrassing; circular performance; third; honesty; direction; dead ends

(Left) excerpt from a self-interview.

(Throughout presentation – what was discovered???? They found nothing...)

Money and the cage/prison cell – do we exchange or not?

Slick presentation/visual appeal – lying (is it a lie) – glossy pretense – do you have to lie in order to give?

Satan (undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-defeat) Jesus fucking christ!

Language bla bla bla bla (stand over here – witgenstein) (example of language – where is it? Of all the examples she could have used etc etc)???

Blergh blergh

Lets talk some rubbish!

NO! NO!

We will not talk nonsense

Fuck art, let's fight.

Merging universal babble (language as nonsense, bla bla bla) and the GUT WRENCHING, setting your soul on fire type of shit called TRUTH-

WE MUST SPEAK THE TRUTH

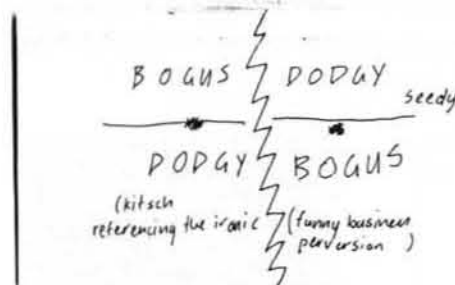
We will not stay in the prison cell – we do not want to indulge/enjoy! No more!

Its not good enough! Fight fight fight!

Selling your soul.

fight fight fight; states of being (dynamic); intensity; enjoyment; indulgence; Satan; lies; honesty; language (as excess); language (word games); fire; truth; positions (cowboy); positions (institutionalised prisoner); what happens when nothing happens

(Immediately above) self-directed statements and questions.



popular opposites; kitsch; funny stuff; bad form; perversion; positions (scoundrel)

(Left) diagram showing the blurred relationship between bogus and dodgy.

**theory vs. practice; giving and receiving; things that are round (arguments); language (as an expression of nothing to express together with the obligation to express); meaning; art; explanation; honesty; lies; hysteric vs. master; dead horse (riding); dead horse (beating)**

(Below) excerpt from a self-directed note.

There is still the problem of interdependency of dissertation and exhibition/ text and work – how to practically communicate with viewers who have not/will not read the dissertation: In one way I am inclined to dismiss this as irrelevant given that the presumed mutual exchange (give and take) between artist + viewer / work + viewer is a farce (that adds an unwanted element of didacticism/prentension), in another way I have become more sympathetic towards the idea of offering:

The sabotaging of the exchange (which was/is motivated by the conviction that there is nothing to offer, nothing to be said, nothing to be done etc.) is difficult to control – there is, potentially, no way out of this dilemma and it may need to remain a dream (Beckett's).

Whilst confusion is preferable to commodification/the meaningful, it is also a bottomless pit – yet this is precisely what needs to be maintained – so yes, this is a problem. But possibly something that needs to remain a problem, and explained as such. There was the idea of having an audio guide: if this form of explanation is made available it will have to also be contradictory in some way, the guides will have to lie.

There are, at this moment, two possibilities:

1. I figure out how to raze the established conventions between work + text.

2. This proves to be impossible, in which case, the 'explanation', the things that will be interpreted as such (by virtue of the established relationship between work and text) will occupy their conventional, secondary position (first the work, then a voice in your ear or a text on the wall etc) but will also, therefore, have to lie. The condition of this second possibility, which appears at this point to be more likely than the former, will then be the presentation of a confession of some sort, a speech or something else, that I have failed to break away from this convention and am therefore in love with my prison cell. The lost causes will prove to be false dilemmas etc. But I do not necessarily want this and will try to avoid it, as much as I do not want my project to be concluded/solved, I also do not want to denounce it as a circular/self contained failure – it needs to remain strong. (The difference, I think, will remain to be a division between the employment of the strategy and the analysis of it, which are not necessarily separable, but could appear to be so if need be.)

#### Hypothetical ending 1:

And again, I end up confused and leave it there.

#### Hypothetical ending 2:

The 'false dilemma' is revealed to be a strategy, employed for the very same purpose (staying inside the cell). The 'confession' is revealed to be a lie, I get back on the horse, charge back to the lost cause and become a martyr as I die fighting for it.

I always speak the truth.

Imagine that you are sitting beside me: as you lean in I begin to choke on my words, I rattle off a list of references that demonstrate my excellent choice of sympathies: Lacanian psychoanalysis, Mao Tse-Tung, Austrian or East European art collectives, Samuel Beckett, Francis Picabia, Mike Kelly, Gustave Courbet, the God of the old testament, Jesus Christ and Satan. Suitably impressed you lean back into your chair, I place my hand on your leg and we have an enjoyable conversation. Your snake-skin eyes pass over the room, a cardboard spaceship stands alongside a black fibreglass pig, plastic flowers cover a fingered lump of spraypainted cretestone. You focus on an advent poster, hung between a drawing of a small white rabbit and a newspaper clipping of a chimpanzee hugging a baby tiger it illustrates a crude representation of the wide and the narrow road. I take my cue to start explaining again. I spin the yarn, get worked up and start explaining myself through transliterated gestures: a stunted hmwh m -mh rises out of my chest, an illustration of the nauseating surge that keeps us alive, wheeling about with one foot nailed to the ground. You stand up, as if to leave, we've been here for over an hour. A single tear quivers in the corner of your eye and slips down your cheek like butter on a piece of hot toast, I play it cool and tell you to never give up on your desire.

I always tell the truth.

You're sitting near me rely on you, I started to blame me, I mentioned in the list of nagging shows more choice of sympathy, the scarlet letter psychological, Mao Zedong, the Inter-American or Eastern European art collective Beckett, Francis Picabia, God of the Old Testament, Jesus and Satan. Impression in the chair for you, I put my hand leg, and we have a conversation very good. Your skin a snake's eyes the whole room, board future spacecraft Pig black fiber glass, plastic flower refers once payment spraypainted cretestone. You will focus on the achievement of the poster, hung draw between a rabbit and small clippings from newspapers chimpanzees hug baby tiger, the crude representation of the broad and narrow roads. I can come up with me a fresh start. More than spin yarn, began its work, and began to explain their transliteration sport: a small MH hmwh m - increase in the chest, a horrible example of the county, let us live, in transit over a nailed down to earth. You stand up, because if you go, here we are more than 1 hour. Quivers tear in a corner hot cheeks and connect a piece of butter on toast, play cool and say I never leave your desires.

Several days later, in order to attract the opposite way, I invite you to me, you told me at the stairs. A long time suspended. After several minutes of pleasant banter, we started to shake and sit and smoke cigarettes and construction shona sun lit window on the screen, with silent satisfaction.

**truth (speaking for itself); language (word games); states of being (dynamic); truth; explanation; erotic tendency; stoppages; let's get stupid; states of being (definitely empty)**

(Immediately above) script for a three minute introductory presentation as part of the MFA seminar program at the Michaelis School of Fine Art.

The second half of the text was translated from English into various different languages and then back to English using Google's online translation application (a process introduced to me by Ryan van Huyssteen).





stones; emollient; things that are round (spheroid); exfoliant

(Right) stone.



body (teeth); body (calculus); rocks

(Left) rock from Greyton (Western Cape).



B.A.20. (top)  
B.A.63. (bottom)

*language (as an expression of nothing to express together with the obligation to express); Robert Sloon; conversation; things that are round (arguments); architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb); giving and receiving; truth; lies; honesty; people; proximity; positions (valetudinarian); the best friends*

Conversation with Robert Sloon, founder and editor of *Art Heat*, a self-styled, art criticism oriented blog based in Cape Town.

Robert Sloon invited me to guest edit the blog together with Ryan van Huyssteen and Ahmed Patel under the auspices of our short-lived collaborative title 'the best friends'. The conversation below took place online three-days after our positions as guest editors had been taken up and was posted on Art Heat together with a polite and probably unnecessary resignation.



1:55 PM me: Hi, I'm 5 mins early but we might as well go for it

1:56 PM Robert: ok

1:59 PM me: hmm, I'm not sure if this is working very well, this computer is giving me trouble

I didn't get your last two lines

Robert: I didn't write anything yet.

me: oh, ok well that's fine then

2:01 PM What I thought is that we can use this conversation (after editing) to serve as an intro, as well as coming to an agreement about the comments issue

2:02 PM Robert: Ok. I think we need a little more than an

intro. I think maybe a justification even. I'm not sure that what you're doing is what I had in mind when I invited you as a Guest Editor

me: I thought not, that's why I wanted to chat

2:03 PM I had to do a masters presentation on wednesday, and I took a similar approach (obscure content) which didn't go down very well at all

2:04 PM but its got me thinking about how people respond to things that appear unexplained - either they think you're trying to be smart, that you don't know what you're doing, or that you're an idiot

not altogether ideal

Robert: So how do you see it.

2:07 PM me: Taking you up on your offer as guest editor was quite a contentious issue with us. In one way we were pleased with the invitation and the opportunity to do something with our time, on the other hand we were slightly wary of the context of art heat

2:08 PM we weren't sure whether we would be able to use it as a neutral space

Robert: It isn't a neutral space.

2:10 PM me: No, I interpreted your offer, as well as your invitation of previous guest editors and some of your more recent posts, as an attempt to try and do something different with the site, to focus less on the heat side of things and take the blog further into a different area of criticism

2:11 PM personally, I don't value the musing blog style of writing

2:13 PM Robert: I am trying new things and different styles. But I don't necessarily see the value of random content in this context

Nor how it is different criticism?

2:14 PM me: We've only just started - you'll have to trust us if we're going to continue, and we would like to continue

2:15 PM I should also explain how we decided to approach this project

Robert: I can be convinced to trust you. I still need some vision.

2:16 PM me: with the decision to accept your offer we decided on a few conditions

the first was to disallow comments

2:17 PM the second was to avoid speaking in the first person or to express any opinion (which was decided after Ahmed

made the point that most blogging is primarily aimed towards self-promotion)

2:18 PM Robert: Sorry. Went offline for a second. I'm back  
me: ok. did you get that last bit?

Robert: until was to disallow comments

2:19 PM me: ok this was next - the second was to avoid speaking in the first person or to express any opinion (which was decided after Ahmed made the point that most blogging is primarily aimed towards self-promotion)

2:21 PM I've always felt a bit ambivalent about Artheat, I have been told that it was conceived as a work, do you still see it that way?

Robert: No

me: What's changed?

2:22 PM Robert: Nothing changed. It was conceived as work, but not executed as a work

The value of writing seemed more important in this context than the value of the artwork it would have made

2:23 PM me: I should admit then that I feel ambivalent about art criticism as well, (and art)

in terms of its critical worth

2:24 PM Robert: Ok. That's a pity. I invited you because you are young and I thought you might have something critical to offer.

2:26 PM me: the offering thing is actually a case in point - the idea that a text or a work should aim to fulfill a reciprocal demand is often what sabotages it.

but that's another discussion altogether

2:27 PM can you tell me how you see the comments as an integral part of the site

Robert: Reciprocal demand makes it effective in communication

2:28 PM me: Communication succeeds with or without it, a signifier is always a signifier, with or without intent

or demand

2:29 PM there's a nice Samuel Beckett quote that sums it up

2:30 PM he says in conversation that he dreams of an art unresentful of its insuperable indigence, and too proud for the farce of giving and receiving

Robert: Yes. But intent does give direction to the

communication.

2:32 PM me: I know, but that isn't really the main issue - I don't think that communication (language, text, art etc) should have to offer anything - it's usually worth nothing, the promise of meaning only leads to more and more bullshit.

2:34 PM Robert: I am unfortunately too proud for the farce of philosophical debate. I do believe in meaning in art and in criticism.

2:35 PM me: ha ha, well that's ok, I usually struggle to convince people that meaning has no meaning, and end up trying to explain why human suffering isn't important and looking like a crazy nazi

can we discuss the comments issue?

2:38 PM Robert: I think the comments issue is null and void until I feel convinced that what you are producing on the site has value. This is a site of art criticism. I need to know why you feel your posts are appropriate and not just illegible?

Then we can discuss the details.

2:40 PM me: hmm, this is more difficult than I expected, I can't really defend them, but I can say that they are not illegible, it's up to the reader to take what they can

2:41 PM confusion can be productive

if you are prepared to be confused and not just feel like a shit head because you've been left out of the loop

and there is no loop

2:43 PM Robert: Ok. If I except that they might be legible, why are they appropriate in this context?

2:44 PM sorry. Accept not except

2:45 PM me: got it, They're our response to guest editing your blog, if you wanted contributions only then it would have been a different story, we were really hoping to be able to change a lot more, background, masthead etc.

2:46 PM we had to break the ice somehow, artheat is not an easy space to work with

Robert: Why do you need to challenge the medium?

2:48 PM me: because there are certain things that we disagree with, you said 'opinion, comment...go wild just don't get me sued', we couldn't simply accept the medium, we had to raze some ground first

but it's also important that it isn't seen as antagonistic, because it isn't

2:49 PM Robert: Razing seems a little antagonistic.

2:50 PM me: I guess it does, but it's not, unless you don't want anyone to fuck with your ground, in which case you shouldn't invite them onto it.

2:51 PM Robert: I invite many people into my home

2:52 PM me: Exactly, and you have a choice to either let us stay or kick us out

2:53 PM I just knew that we had to discuss this at some stage because it's too easily read as cheap sabotage or colourful antagonism

Robert: That's a passive aggressive stance.

2:54 PM me: It's not, if only gmail chat had intonation widgets, we're not trying to fuck up your house.

widgets/emoticons, you know what I mean

Robert: :)

2:55 PM me: it really works so well

2:57 PM ok so now you know, I've got a lot more to say, what else...

2:58 PM Robert: I don't know. I'm still not sure if what you are doing is effective in this context. However, I will give you the benefit of my doubt. On the other hand, I'd like the readers to have their say.

3:01 PM me: Well they can always email us - allowing people to comment is just like allowing people to vote, it's not a real gesture, though I understand its function on your site when its operating as per usual

3:02 PM I will post emails

3:03 PM Robert: It's not a function of the blog. It's one of the

principles of the blog. It's not negotiable.

3:05 PM me: How not negotiable, we're not asking you to take comments off entirely - I just don't want to propagate anonymous cynicism, it's possible that we'll agree to just censor all the comments, though I doubt that that will help our case much

3:06 PM :)

5 minutes

3:11 PM Robert: "I honestly do wonder, without wishing to be morbid, how I reached this present pass. So far as I can remember of my youth, I chose the secret road because it seemed to lead straightest and furthest towards my country's goal. The enemy in those days was we could point at and read about in the papers. Today, all I know is that I have learned to interpret the whole of life in terms of conspiracy. This is the sword I have lived by, and as I look around me now I see it is the sword I shall die by as well. These people terrify me but I am one of them. If they stab me in the back, then at least that is the judgment of my peers" George Smiley in a letter to his estranged wife Anne from John Le Carré, The Honourable Schoolboy 1978.

5 minutes

3:16 PM Robert: Francis, I have to run. I have to be at work in 5 mins. I think we have reached a point, can you finish via email?

3:17 PM me: no problem, thanks.

Robert: Thanks.

me: bye

Robert: byebye

*"The end result of reconstructing the world brick by brick is a world comprised of nothing more than bricks" (Miller 2000: 74).*

**architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb);  
architecture (empire); early learning**

Quote from an article by John Miller (2000: 74).



*positions (cowboy); fire; magic*

(Above) stills from a digital animation.



*the best friends; public performance; art; giving and receiving*

(Immediately above) documentation from *I didn't like it when I was there but now I remember it fondly*, 2009, an interactive performance by Christian Nerf with the Best Friends (Ahmed Patel, Ryan van Huyssteen and Francis Burger) at the Performing Arts Network of South Africa (PANSa) 24 hour festival.



*animals (parrot); animals (dog); novelty vs. invention*

(Immediately above, left to right) plastic parrot with enamel and wood and found carved miniature dog with brass chain.

*geography (strata);  
tomography; stones*

(Immediately right)  
stone.



*stones; exfoliant;  
body (appendage)*

(Immediately right) stone.



*magic; states of being (definitely  
full)*

(Box object B.A.70. not pictured)  
one and a half mints  
in one package.

*craft; space-time (striated);  
something to do*

(Box object B.A.15. not pictured)  
whittled wood-chip from Betty's  
Bay. Property of Douglas Gimberg.

(top-left) B.A.64.1.  
(middle-right) B.A.64.2.  
(bottom-left, not pictured) B.A.15.  
(bottom-right, not pictured) B.A.70.

SEX, lies and rocking chairs.  
 Carrying the word  
 Back to the wall  
 Black hole  
 Like a house on fire  
 Lunatic fringe  
 All the rage  
 Making offers that can't be refused  
 Milk of human kindness  
 Wages of sin  
 In the heat of the moment

ESTRAGON:  
 In the meantime, nothing happens.  
 Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's  
 awful!

VLADIMIR:  
 (to Pozzo). Tell him to think.  
 POZZO:  
 Give him his hat.

We wait. We are bored. (He throws up his hand.) No,  
 don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no  
 denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do  
 we do? We let it go to waste. . . In an instant all will  
 vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of  
 nothingness!

Ah if only this voice could stop, this meaningless  
 voice which prevents you from being nothing, just  
 barely prevents you from being nothing and nowhere,  
 just enough to keep alight this little yellow flame  
 feebly darting from side to side, panting, as if  
 straining to tear itself from its wick, it should never  
 have been lit, or it should never have been fed, or it  
 should have been put out, put out, it should have been  
 let go out.

Perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me  
 already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold  
 of my story, before the door that opens on my story,  
 that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it  
 will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll  
 never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go  
 on, I can't go on, I'll go on.

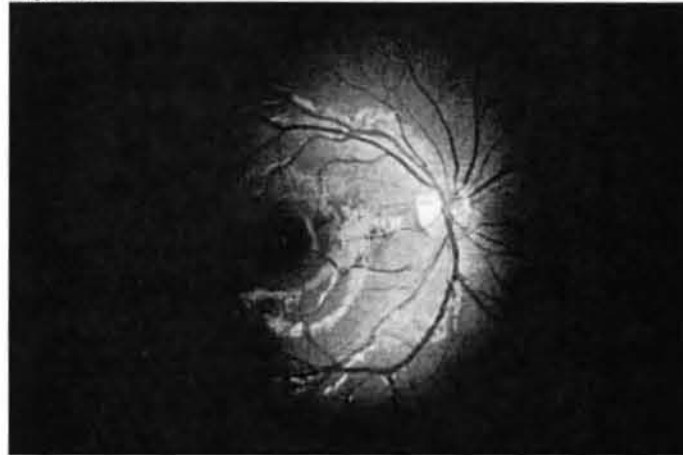
language (word games); voice (the meaningless voice that prevents you from being  
 nothing and nowhere); Samuel Beckett

Print-out with notes in preparation for the selection of a provisional project title for *The  
 Indulgence and Exhaustion of the Meaningless Voice*.

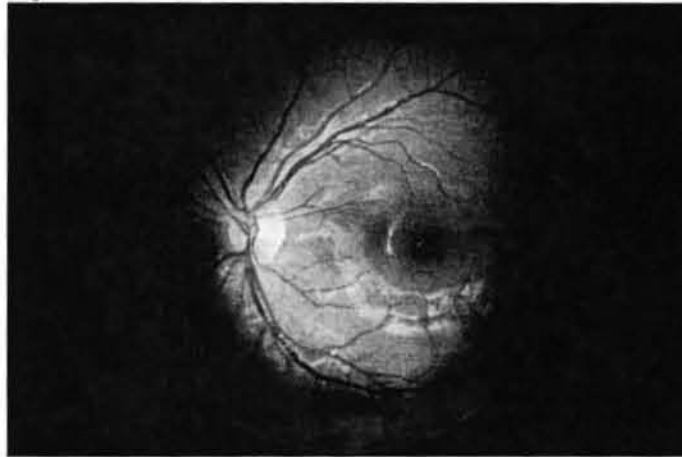
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Burger\*Francis L



*things that are round; rotten nature; body (blood); body (eyes); doctors*

Digital photographs showing the internal structure of my eyes.  
Photograph by Dr. Zoran Alexi.



*animals (goat); craft; something to do; space-time (smooth); architecture (house vs. temple vs. tomb)*

Plywood off-cuts and plastic toy with balsa wood, dried flowers and enamel.

**A vs. B; public performance; food (cake); propaganda; announcements to the universe; freedom; exhibition; Slavoj Žižek**

(Below) documentation and associated reference from Žižek's *In Defense of Lost Causes* (2008) of an interactive performance in the Company Gardens, Cape Town. (Participants were invited to choose between strawberry or chocolate cake). Sign reads: TIME TO CHOOSE.

*"Freedom is not something given, it is regained through a hard struggle in which one should be ready to risk everything... True freedom is not a freedom of choice made from a safe distance, like choosing between a strawberry cake and a chocolate cake; true freedom overlaps with necessity, one makes a truly free choice when one's choice puts at stake one's very existence – one does it because one simply 'cannot do otherwise'" (Žižek 2008: 70-71).*



**bad form; Blank Projects; pedagogy; symbolic registration**

(Above left) sporadically updated assemblage on the facade of the new location for Blank Projects in Woodstock, Cape Town. (Sign reads YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN and was installed on account of a misinformed press release announcing the opening of the new space and *Bad Form*). Collaboration with Douglas Gimberg, Christian Nerf, his niece and nephew and Dawie van Vuuren.

death; miscommunication; language (word games); funny stuff; misanthropy; accident; pornography; language (kitsch); Ahmed Patel; Ryan van Huyssteen; I AM SIGNAL

Three folded broadsheet publications  
(Mister Motherfucker, Francis Burger;  
Tristesse, Ryan van Huyssteen;  
and Screaming bastard child,  
Ahmed Patel).



## Misery

One night after attending a distant friend's birthday party my girlfriend and I were involved in a car accident. There were drinks so we got drunk and then when everyone else began to leave we did the same; it is important to know when to go home. Once we were in the car Katherine began to turn on me. When she drinks she becomes violent and manic, it's an effect of the pills she is taking which are meant to prevent her from becoming violent and manic. The drink really fucks her up. Keeping control of the situation I let her say whatever she wanted to say. When she said that I was an embarrassment I let it pass, when she said I had behaved shamefully at the party I let that pass too, but when she pulled the steering wheel, causing the car to veer to the left I lost my cool and back handed her as hard as I could spraining my wrist and breaking her nose and loosening some of her teeth. When she pulled the steering wheel the second time (causing the car to veer to the left), I over corrected and we collided with an oncoming car. I was hardly hurt but she was pretty messed up after that. In the other car a child died. I blame her. She blames me. The dead child's parents blame us.

I never liked Katherine. She just suddenly appeared in my life with her black hair, her cheap painted on base, her buck teeth, her mental problems and her poorness. I guess I once did see something in her and maybe once I would have said I loved her, but that was long ago, four years ago and I have often wished I had never met her.

I like her even less now that her legs are gummy. Her face is also messed now, partly by me, partly from the impact of the collision. She is far easier to control now that she is in a wheelchair. When she begins to pick on me or begins to turn I, simply wheel her into the bathroom and lock the door. It is in there that she cools off. I return an hour or two later and find her either staring dumbly from her wheelchair or staring dumbly from the floor, but always staring dumbly. I like seeing her lying on the bathroom floor like that; she looks as stupid and helpless as I know she is. I give her cigarettes so that she can occupy herself without occupying me. I have employed a nurse to wash Katherine and feed her and massage her wasted legs. Katherine hates the nurse. I don't mind her. Katherine says the nurse hurts her.

Katherine says the nurse is a transvestite who molests her. Katherine says a lot of things. The accident must have softened her head. I shut her off by pushing her towards the bathroom. Sometimes I lock her in. Often it doesn't have to come to that.

I have spoken to her parents. I told them that they need to pick up Katherine because I don't want her. Her dad, Billy or Bill, tells me that I am a piece of shit. He tells me I have a problem with dealing with problems. I tell him the only problem I have is his crazy daughter. He tells me not to call this number again and hangs up. Sometimes Katherine's mother answers. I ask her if mental illness runs in the family. She begins to cry and calls her husband, Bill or Billy, he tells me to fuck off and stop harassing them. I tell him that I am not harassing them I just want them to take Katherine away. He hangs up. Sometimes I phone her brother, the one she says molested her, I ask him to come and fetch Katherine. He says he doesn't know what I am talking about. I say I am talking about Katherine. He says I have the wrong number. Maybe I do, but I insist that if he was man enough to fondle her lady lumps he should be man enough to take her home.

Sometimes I take Katherine for a push around the block. She cries and performs the entire time just like a stupid baby. I tell her the fresh air will do her good. She tells me god will punish me. I ask her 'punish me for what?' She says I will be punished for what I am doing to her. I ask her what I am doing to her and she says that I am parading her around like a freak. I tell her that god did this to her in the first place. She swears to me, in the name of god, that I will be punished. She says I enjoy showing off my crippled bride because I am sick. I remind her that she and I are not married and that I am not sick. I point out that she and I are stuck together because no one else wants her. She says that that is not true and that I am stuck to her because I love her. I tell her that I don't love her because she is mad and ugly. She tells me that she doesn't need me, but I know she does. On these walks, to prove to her that no one wants her and that it is me alone that she needs, I occasionally ask passers-by if they would please take Katherine, I ask them if they want her. They ignore me. Sometimes teenage boys who smoke cigarettes laugh and ask me what they would want my crippled wife for. I say that she isn't my wife. They laugh at us.



## Tristesse

Bridget Reynolds is a rancorous and paranoid woman. She lives in constant fear that people are against her; she is a paranoid. She is never able to keep people close to her because she is jealous and suspicious. If she makes friends, man or woman, she soon turns against them or rather she turns them against her, thus confirming her belief that no one can be trusted and everyone will turn against her. How she turned out this way no one can say for sure; she came from an exceptionally hospitable family. Her was the type of family that often had relatives and friends over; the type of family that even had friends of relatives and relatives of friends, staying in their enormous and very warm house. My suspicion is that maybe one of those (or several) honorable guests took advantage of young Bridget and that is why she is so suspicious and paranoid of people. Another guess is that maybe no guest took advantage of young Bridget. How would that have turned her into what she is? Well maybe she had thought she knew that someone would and was proved wrong, thus confirming that people cannot be trusted; not even to transgress. That is all speculation, but I can say one thing for certain: we should never try to make sense of people's actions when they are suffering from delusions or suffering from some or other form of mental illness.

I did mention that Bridget's house was big, and it was. Her parents are really wealthy. The food they consume daily is only the finest. It is delicious after delicacy. Their palates are satisfied with only the best. The black meat of the whale is an especial favorite; Bridget's father has a connection that has a connection with a Japanese connection. It is whale meat at least six times a year - making their excitement some of the most expensive in the country. The wealth of the family was lucky for Bridget; since no one would ever marry her, give her a job, or be friends with her. Bridget would be sure to ruin any relationship that presented itself. The only people who can tolerate her are her parents, but that does not say much for them, they are feisty in the most Victorian way. The point is that Bridget is lucky her parents are rich. She can live her miserable life isolated in a house on an estate surrounded by big walls with no prying neighbors. And that is how she lives fully dependent on her family. But her parents could not give her one thing and that was a child.

Having decided to have a baby and having decided that a significant other would be out of the question, Bridget began to travel the bars. She had no luck because she is predisposed to disliking even the nicest and drunkest people. The bar trawling was not working, natural selection had declared Bridget unfit, but she did not stop there. Who needs natural selection when you can make your own selection? Bridget went to a sperm bank, and chose a man from a photo and his profile; white, dark hair, an oncologist (there were none of those in the bars). Bridget got artificially inseminated and in the usual time it takes she had a little baby girl, who she called Tristesse, an ugly name for an ugly baby. Mother and daughter now hardly ever left the house, only people who came around were the maid and people from the supermarket to drop off groceries. Bridget was happy and the baby was like all other babies, just a little uglier.

One day Bridget developed a suspicion that her maid, Martha, was stealing from her. Her suspicion grew and grew, and as it grew Martha's face began to betray her guilt more and more. One day Bridget accused Martha of stealing. She did this frankly, and with no concern whatsoever for Martha's feelings. What did Martha say? She said, "what did I steal?" Bridget said "you know exactly, now get out of my house and don't come back." Martha left and because she left Bridget read into that action an admission of guilt.

With no one left in the house to cast a gaze of suspicion upon, quite unconsciously, Bridget began to suspect dangers coming from the outside. What evil lurked out there? What if Martha, being a Zulu, decided to revenge herself on Bridget? The more Bridget thought about this the more afraid she became. It got to a stage where she was imagining black faces with murderous black eyes watching her through the windows, or from the bushes while she hung up the washing. They, her murderers, were everywhere just waiting to get their hands on her.

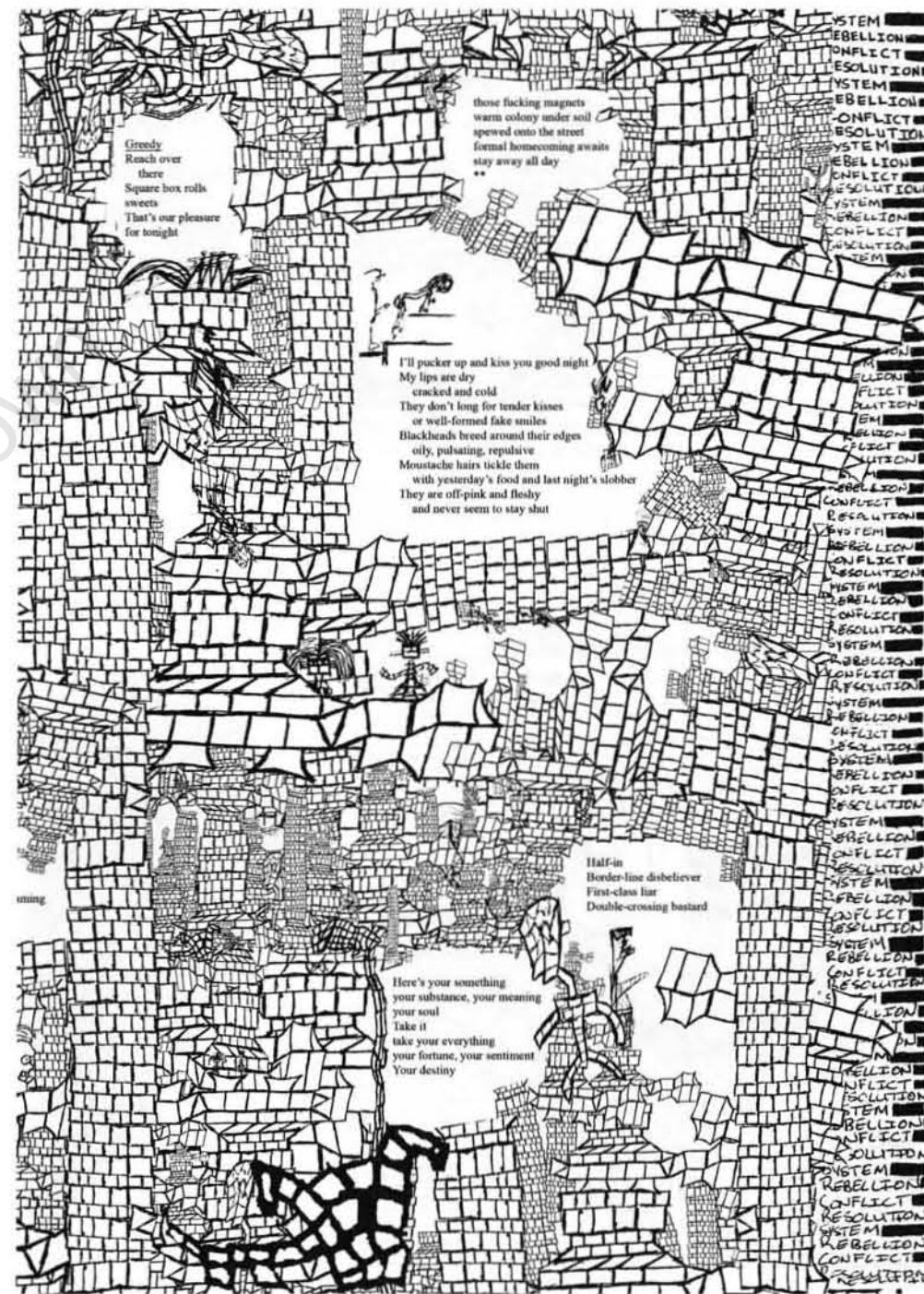
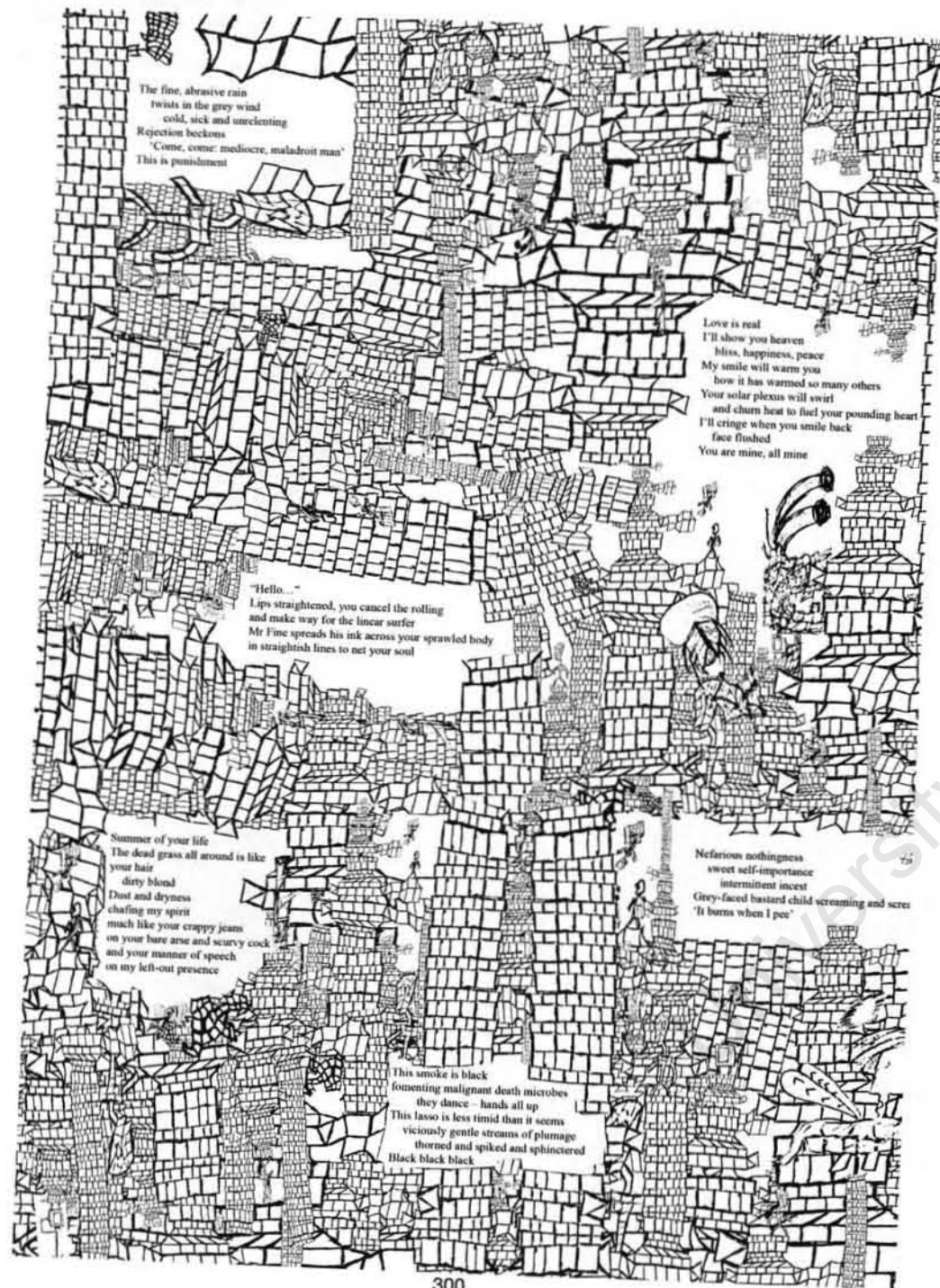
Bridget knew that in the house she was safe. The entrance to her house had a steel gate which could be locked. Between that gate and the front door there was an area of about one metre deep by two metres wide. With the door closed this resembled a small cage. Bridget looked at her gate and her door. The door was secure; no doubt about that, it could not be broken down nor broken into through. An extra feature on the front door was a spring action bolt which would engage itself when the door was closed. The door could be locked without a key, but only opened with a key. The gate however was a problem. Bridget wanted one of those alarm lock gates which would enable her to make an escape if she was attacked outside of the house. The scenario she saw on TV went something like this - woman outside sending her flowers, vicious criminal with big knife runs at her, woman runs to the front door, alarm locks the gate and escaped the clutches of evil. Without that gate she would be unable to sleep easy. The alarm lock gate was essential, she had to have it. It was installed not long after.

Despite Bridget's paranoia at this stage she was happy. Martha was gone and it was her and Tristesse. Tristesse had grown a little and was a healthy and strong baby. Disaster struck around this time. One morning at about midday while feeding Tristesse, Bridget's ears pricked up. She thought she heard something, some kind of close to unmistakable noise emanating from the front yard. Instead of thinking that it is probably nothing, Bridget armed herself with her canister of pepper spray. She first looked out of all the windows. Nothing unusual, but that is probably what they want her to think. Bridget was about to call her security company to come and check it out, but she thought she would first have one more look. She went to the front door opened it and stood behind her alarm lock gate, it is times like these when you realize that you can never have enough security. She listened and listened. She could hear a rattling and it was growing; it was only the wind. Before Bridget could turn around to stop what she anticipated, the front door blew closed and the lock sprung closed. She was locked out, or rather locked into the cage she had made for herself.

When the supermarket came to drop off her groceries they found her semi-conscious in her cage. She was dehydrated and incoherent. The men from the supermarket alerted the authorities and while they waited they broke her out of there. She was taken to hospital but it was too late for little Tristesse. She died of helplessness.







**Crazy alien music**

Fourteen years ago, to this day, I have fourteen years ago, to this day, I have never once suspected that there might be other beings inhabiting my house. Fourteen years ago, to this day, I have never once suspected that there might be other beings inhabiting my house.

Yesterday I went down to the bottom of the laundry room to collect the lint out of the filters. The soft little bag on my hip was bulging and with every step I took it shifted small cotton snowflakes into the air. Suddenly I heard a terrible sound, low gurgling base and a high pitched moan, like a lonely kitten crying on a distant planet. My blood ran cold and I felt a strange sensation creep into my bones. My legs started twitching and bouncing around, my arms leapt up and dangled my hands over my head. The soft little bag fell to the ground and silently imploded, a tiny fluffed up mushroom cloud rose up over it and settled somewhere near the coffee machine. I boogied out of there as fast as I could, legs shaking and bending, arms hanging crazy over my head, face contorted in a woozy scowl. That crazy alien music followed me to my grave. Yesterday I went down to the bottom of the laundry room to collect the lint out of the filters. The soft little bag on my hip was bulging and with every step I took it shifted small cotton snowflakes into the air. Suddenly I heard a terrible sound, low gurgling base and a high pitched moan, like a lonely kitten crying on a distant planet. My blood ran cold and I felt a strange sensation creep into my bones. My legs started twitching and bouncing around, my arms leapt up and dangled my hands over my head. The soft little bag fell to the ground and silently imploded, a tiny fluffed up mushroom cloud rose up over it and settled somewhere near the coffee machine. I boogied out of there as fast as I could, legs shaking and bending, arms hanging crazy over my head, face contorted in a woozy scowl. That crazy alien music followed me to my grave.



**"...that crazy alien music followed me to my grave!"**

**Mister Motherfucker**



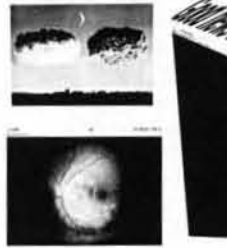
**"...through my chest into my cold black soul."**

Seven years ago, when I was just twelve years old I met a man with a long grey beard and dark shining eyes. He told me many things, that the moon was a giant light bulb, its flickering slowed down by the millions of footcandle it took to cross the great oceans. He told me that dogs were servants of God, their barks a crude code reporting our every move. He told me that I would grow up to be a horse whisperer, that horses were the messengers of evil, sent by the devil to taunt us with their hand, shimmering muscles, their gleaming brown skin and their thundering hooves. He told me that when he was a small child he woke up in the night and cried out softly, asking for water over and over again, and that his father lifted him out of his bed and carried him outside, leaving him standing at the locked front door. Monkeys bit his bare feet and legs, free by their eggs in his hair, and a lone black station cooled their house. He told me that women never die, and that my mother was only sleeping under that cold greenish sky. That the moose kept her plump by pushing bits of soil up her nose and the ants kept her hair golden by stealing honey from the bees. Sometimes he would trail his long grey beard into hundreds of tiny plants, twisting and bending them to suit his name. He told me that I would have to learn how to knit, and that every day that I lived through was a big fuck you to Jesus himself. He dressed me up in his words, and dressed me down with his dark shining eyes, staring straight through my chest into my cold black soul.



**"I've been a sucker for infomercials ever since"**

onto the kitchen table for a whole year. We just pretended not to see it. I eventually couldn't handle it anymore and I boarded up the ceiling with some planks I found behind the freezer door. It was a once in a life time opportunity. The insurance agent assured me that we would be covered for everything, even this. She was always her favourite. I never got a chance to say goodbye. We walked until the sun came up and I felt truly happy I got a job selling used cars. I went to the interview in a short skirt, I only ever slept with my boys at the end of the financial year. I couldn't ever speak about it without giggling, every time he said "Bryan Adams" I would burst out laughing until my lungs gave in and I spat blood for a week. He said that he loved me. I felt as though I had been kissed by a thousand angels. I have always been bisexual and I think god every day for bringing something so special into my life. He would turn off the light and speak in a high, squeaky voice about the numbers game. He would never let me leave any fun. He was always so jealous and I was always too scared that he would leave me alone with a baby, three dogs and a home loan. My father always said that I was beautiful and that I just had to hang on to the first one that would have me. I would have married him instead if I'd known. He always knew what to say to make me feel better. I would never have guessed. My son in law was murdered two months ago and nothing happened. Doo-doo-doo-doo-doo-ho-ho. When he came home just cried and cried and cried until he gave in and I got what I thought I wanted. What I didn't know was that at that stage he had already cashed in his chips and in the end it wasn't worth the effort. I would always find my hair by my self until I went to school and made friends with another girl whose mother bought her the things that she saw on tv that you could order over the phone. I've been a sucker for infomercials ever since. I have it all, a self inflating aerospace mattress, a three piece cereal dispenser, a home entertainment system that firms and tones your muscles as you watch TV, a set of twelve non stick pans, a floor radiant that cleans up spit dog food and steams carpets, a clothes line shaped like a rodeo bull, a screw loosener. Fifteen original prints by Meggit Lautacher, a light switch that glows in the dark, a puppy that never grows up. You name it, I've got it.

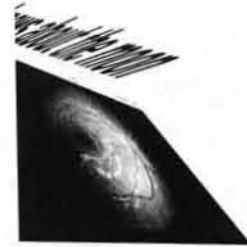


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**"...he looked lords own me"**

**francis**



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**"at me with the cry in his eyes"**

**burger**



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**mister motherfucker**





Posters printed on insides of broadsheet publications  
(shown on preceding pages).



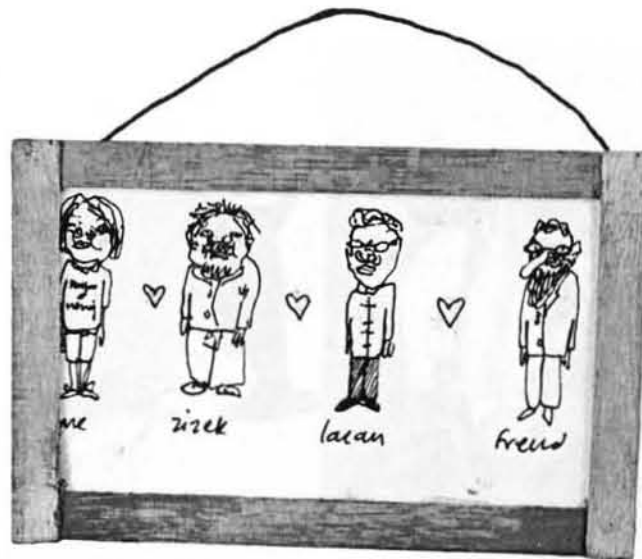
people; body  
(acephalous);  
leaderless group

(Above) model  
figurines with enamel.

animals (crocodile)

(Immediately above) brass  
crocodile with enamel.

(top) B.B.74.4.  
(bottom) B.A.28.



*masters vs. daddies; Sigmund Freud; Jacques Lacan; Slavoj Žižek; pedagogy*

(Above) pen and pencil crayon on paper, miniature meranti frame, string and enamel.



*rocks; yellow*

(Above) yellow rock.

B.A.61. (bottom)

B.A.38. (top)



*body (excrement); pseudo-science; body (organs); doctors; positions (quack)*

Illustrations from *Tissue cleansing through bowel management*, a publication advocating the method developed by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg where portions of the bowels were removed to prevent the spread of disease. Other inventions by the Doctor included a process whereby yoghurt was given to both ends of the digestive system simultaneously and Cornflakes, an idea that was adopted by his brother Will and used as the basis for the Kellogg's cereal empire (Rotten.com 2008: sp).



monstration; weak  
logic; play; knife-holder  
Magic rubik's cube.



research; architecture (house vs.  
temple vs. tomb); craft (hobby)

(Right) printed foam cutout  
(research building).



B.B.73. (top)  
B.B.98. (bottom)



dancing bear; Francis Picabia; posi-  
tions (narcissist)

(Above) Francis Picabia, 1946. Chiquito á  
l'ours. Ink on paper (found photostat).

"in White Baby, Pope.L. entered the  
performance space dragging a white doll  
behind him like a child with a baby doll. He  
then walked up to a podium and explained:  
"I am being chased down the street by a little  
white baby with no clothes on. It is a nice baby.  
A little white baby. I do not like it; yet I am tied  
to it. Now I want to hide from the little baby.  
Instead, I pull it along the neighborhood like a  
little doggie" (Bessire 2002: 23)

"I kept trying to get him to admit that he wanted  
to accomplish something, to change the world  
in some small way. He steadfastly refused. For  
William, and maybe for every artist, art is a  
visceral process that feels like the right – or  
maybe the wrong thing to do – which makes it  
the right thing to do..." Wilson (2002: 45) on  
William Pope.L.

William Pope.L.; people; something to believe in;  
eccentric performance

"Retro avant-garde is the basic artistic procedure of Neue Slowenische Kunst, based on the premise that traumas from  
the past affecting the present and the future can be healed only by returning to the initial conflicts. Modern art has not  
yet overcome the conflict brought about by the rapid and efficient assimilation of historical avant-garde movements in  
the systems of totalitarian states. The common perception of the avant-garde as a fundamental phenomenon of 20th  
century art is loaded with fears and prejudices. On the one hand this period is naively glorified and mythicized, while  
on the other hand its abuses, compromises and failures are counted with bureaucratic pedantry to remind us that this  
magnificent delusion should not be repeated" (Cufer & IRWIN sa: sp).

dead horse (riding); something to believe in; architecture (empire);  
space-time (smooth); freedom; unbecoming; avant-garde

(Above) excerpt from *NSK state in time*, Eda Cufer & IRWIN (Slovene artist  
collective and founders of the Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) state).

What happens when nothing happens...

Considering the relevance/legitimacy of the act –  
The politics of doing nothing

**what happens when nothing happens; the cost of action;  
conscientious objection**

Note on what happens when nothing happens.

**symbolic registration; psychoanalysis; Slavoj Žižek; slips; fetishism; voodoo; Franz Kafka; failure; positions (god)**

(Immediately below) excerpts from Žižek (2006; 1994).

*"The symbolic order emerges from a gift, an offering, that marks its content as neutral in order to pose as a gift: when a gift is offered, what matters is not the content but the link between giver and receiver established when the receiver accepts the gift" (Žižek 2006: 11).*

*"In spite of all its grounding power, the big Other is fragile, insubstantial, properly virtual, in the sense that its status is that of a subjective presupposition. It exists only in so far as subjects act as if it exists – similar to that of an ideological cause like that of communism or nation: it is the substance of the individuals who recognize themselves in it, the ground of their whole existence, the point of reference that provides the ultimate horizon of meaning...yet the only thing that really exists are these individuals and their activity...it is because of the virtual character of the big other that, as Lacan puts it...a letter always arrives at its destination... When I violate a certain rule of decency I never simply do something that the majority of others do not do – I do what 'one' doesn't do" (10).*

Symbolic registration; "oops" as an acknowledgement of a social blunder and as an apology to the big Other. In the case of a communal secret (something that everyone knows everyone knows about, but also something that everyone knows not to acknowledge openly), letting it slip exposes the secret to the big Other.

Lacanian joke about the man who thinks he is a grain of seed, is cured, and then is still afraid of a chicken, because although he knows he is a man and not a seed the chicken might not; *"similarly, the bourgeois subject who attends a Marxist course in commodity fetishism may say to his teacher afterwards that although he (the pupil) knows that the commodities he is dealing with have no magical powers, the commodities seem not to know (it)" (94).*

Quote from letter to Max Brod from Milena Jesenska on Franz Kafka: *"above all, things like money, stock-exchange, the foreign currency administration, type-writers, are for him thoroughly mystical (what they effectively are, only not for us, the others)."*

*"Kafka was able to experience directly these phantasmatic beliefs that we 'normal' people disavow" (98).*

*"Thus the failure of our intention ... changes into an intended failure" (Žižek 1994: 66).*

*"Like americans we too believe in God, but unlike them we do not trust Him" (Laibach quoted in Žižek 1994: 208).*

**hysteric vs. master; art as a question**

(Below) excerpt from Robins (2007: 23).

*"'Reticent objects' are now coaxed into loquaciousness with the aid of audio guides, interpretation panels, information leaflets, activity packs, gallery talks, family days, interactive displays, and lectures and conferences. And latterly, visitors themselves are acknowledged as significant, if not always central, to the process of meaning making" (Robins 2007: 23).*



**enough; people; something to do; what is contemporary art worth?**

Plasticine, plastic and spraypaint on board.



**propaganda; language (word games); experiment; language (kitsch); dead ends**

(Above) unprinted postcard design.

**eccentric performance; embarrassment; unbecoming**

*We always say that it's taking embarrassment and awkwardness into the normal fabric of the world. So when we have an idea such as doing the New Horny Pictures (2001) or to do Drinking Sculptures (1974), if you think for four or five minutes you will reject the work – they are awkward, silly or embarrassing – but if you do it, if you drag yourself out there and the pictures are done and they've been colored and then they're being exhibited, and suddenly in some way it takes on a normality in the world. They are there, we did them and people can discuss them" George (of Gilbert & George) in Obrist (2003: 259).*





**bad form; money; making; truth; ethics; principles; big Other; reinventing the wheel; something to believe in; repetition**

(Below) loose thoughts on Bad Form.

*Bad form research areas:*

*The gallery:*

*Commodification (supplements, marketing, conceptual commodification, curation, group shows) – the market (economic commodification; the suppositions of the masses).*

*Bad formation, malpractice (process, collaboration) (the ethics of making bad art – curating bad/distasteful spaces).*

*The object.*

*Politeness + honesty – pretensions within the industry that allow impoliteness; the Moscow museum's paid announcement in Art Forum after receiving a bad review; speaking ill of the dead.*

**BAD FORM is...TRUTH, FREEDOM, DIGNITY**

*Bad form + limited choices (worse or worser)*

*Popular opposites*

*Grimaces/slips that cannot be ignored (must be spoken for)*

*Sanctioned dissonance*

*Commitment to form*

*Ethics*

*Feeling the need to make shit*

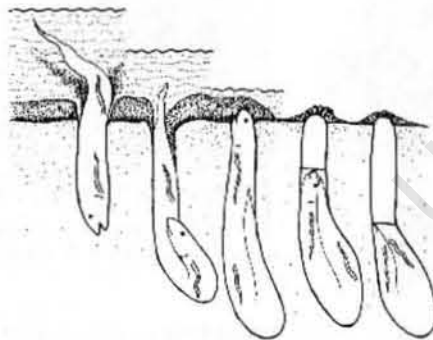
*The wow factor*

*Reinventing the wheel*

*Life is life*

**architecture (house); aestivation; animals (lungfish); holes**

(Right) illustration from an unknown source showing the aestivation of lungfish.



As the water level falls lungfish burrow into the bottom mud to form a cocoon and aestivate through the dry season.

**what happens when nothing happens; rotten nature; misery; language (word games); something to believe in; announcements to the universe; public performance; when I was a boy**

(Below) notes on and documentation of *When I was a boy*, a series of statements printed and posted daily for about two weeks on the window of the Topolino Cafe on Kloof Street in Cape Town. (Statements shown on following pages).



*Everyday I wake up and it's the same; cigarette, cup of tea, print out the poster, put up the poster, wait for the work to work.*

*What happens when nothing happens.*

*It's about nothing. It's about connections fusing and pre-teens blossoming. It's about the illuminati. It's about you. It's about rules. It's about holding on tightly and never letting go.*



*Misery's the river of the world, everybody row.*

*He's never worked on a building site.*

*This is what happens when nothing happens:*

*Everybody row.*



bad form; money; making; truth; ethics; principles; big Other;  
reinventing the wheel; something to believe in; repetition

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The gallery:

Commodification (supplements, marketing, conceptual commodification, curation, group shows) – the market  
(economic commodification; the suppositions of the masses).

Bad formation, malpractice (process, collaboration) (the ethics of making bad art – curating bad/distasteful spaces).

The object.

Politeness + honesty – pretensions within the industry that allow impoliteness; the Moscow museum's paid  
announcement in Art Forum after receiving a bad review; speaking ill of the dead.

BAD FORM is...TRUTH, FREEDOM, DIGNITY

Bad form + limited choices (worse or worser)

Popular opposites

Grimaces/slips that cannot be ignored (must be spoken for)

Sanctioned dissonance

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Ethics

Feeling the need to make shit

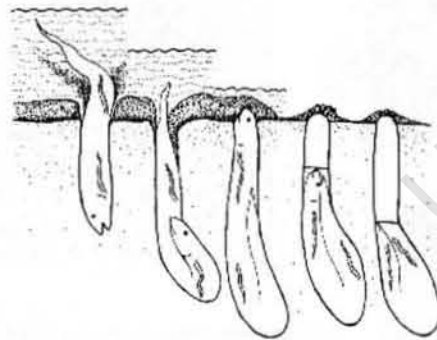
The wow factor

Reinventing the wheel

Life is life

architecture (house); aestiva-  
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It's about you. It's about rules. It's  
about holding on tightly and never  
letting go.



Misery's the river of the world,  
everybody row.

He's never worked on a building site.

This is what happens when nothing  
happens:

Everybody row.



When I was a boy we walked around with plastic bags on our heads and sang songs about whales with real teeth and ate popcorn covered in dust that crunch, crunch, crunched in our dry little mouths.

When I was a boy we opened doors for the ladies.

When I was a boy petrol cost one cent a litre and we rode around in yellow cars with horns that had six different tones so you could communicate your mood to the drivers around you.

When I was a boy I had a dog that could talk and had his own show on SABC 1 called perfect pets.

When I was a boy we smoked dagga and it made our teeth blue.

When I was a boy we knew the value of hard work.

When I was a boy my mother made me massage her feet and I still can't touch her without wanting to punch her in the head.

When I was a boy we wrote poems about girls in our class and filmed our friends doing it in the toilets on our cell phones.

When I was a boy we learnt how to count by shooting baboons on the farm.

When I was a boy my brother killed himself.

When I was a boy I accepted that my life would be a series of disappointments.

When I was a boy I read a book about wild horses that ran on the beach and ate sour figs until their stomachs bloated and they gave birth to little green ponies that drowned themselves in the sea.

When I was a boy there was a man who lived next door to me that kept bees.

When I was a boy I had to clean toilets with a toothbrush.

When I was a boy I could walk backwards for six kilometres.

When I was a boy we made our teachers cry.

When I was a boy we delivered our own milk.

When I was a boy I laughed until I cried.

When I was a boy I ate chicken hearts at a Portuguese restaurant.

When I was a boy I got drunk with my sister and felt her panties under her skirt.

When I was a boy my father told me I was good for something and sent me to a boarding school up country to learn how to read.

When I was a boy I had to mow the lawn with my teeth.

When I was a boy I walked into a street pole and was never called handsome again.

When I was a boy I had a friend who could speak nine official languages.

When I was a boy I got a red bicycle and I named it Eltoro after the spanish impersonator that came to our school and sang candle in the wind.

When I was a boy I wrote a story about a boy who had arms for legs and walked side ways up walls.

When I was a boy I ate dead flies off the window sills.

When I was a boy I had the gift of common sense.

When I was a boy I had a belt made out of walnut shells.

When I was a boy I wanted to take acid.

When I was a boy I always fancied that I'd meet a beautiful woman who would help me take my mind off things.

When I was a boy I loved dogs.

When I was a boy I had to take piano lessons from an old lady who smelt like sour milk and jolly jammers.

When I was a boy I wrote a letter to my future self and threw it into the sea.

When I was a boy I had a jersey with a hood that zipped all the way up over my face.

When I was a boy I hated faggots.

When I was a boy there was only one God.

When I was a boy I couldn't believe that we hadn't won the war.

When I was a boy I burned down our house and laughed about it, after that I was sent to a special school for problem children and they let me go when I started collecting butterflies.

When I was a boy my front teeth were the size of steamrollers.

When I was a boy I always dreamt about boobs.

When I was a boy I dug holes in the ground and had sex with them.

When I was a boy I was allowed to eat as many apples as I liked.

*when I was a boy; language (word games); apples; truth; space-time (smooth); regret*

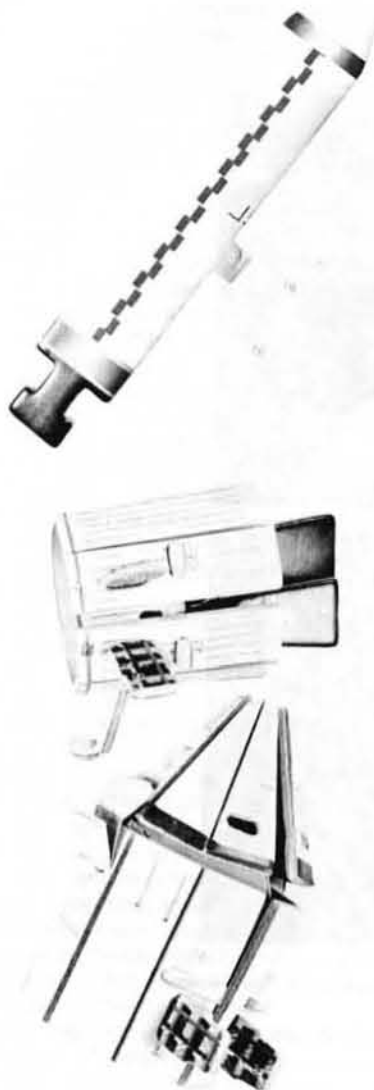
(Above) experimental text.



*rotten nature; sunlight; something to believe in; flowers*

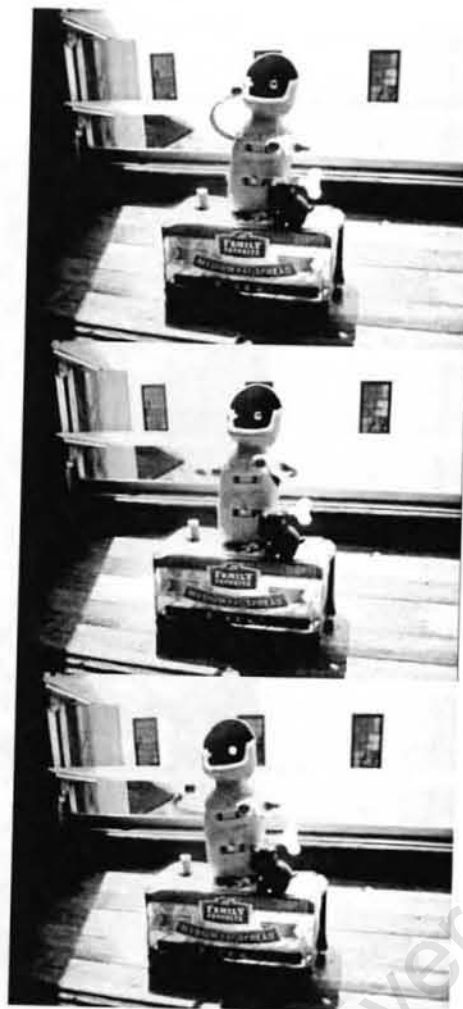
Stills from a cellphone video recorded in De Waal park, Cape Town.





geography (outer-space); craft (hobby)

(Above) leftover parts of half-assembled printed foam cut-out puzzle.



eccentric performance; food (margarine)

(Above) stills from a cellphone video recorded in Michaelis studio of a mechanised toy mounted in a block of medium-fat spread.

Truth; lies; positions (artist); positions (quack); something to believe in; honesty; Jacques Derrida; Marcel Duchamp; Brian Dillon; ethics; Finnegans Wake; surface vs. depth

Excerpt from Brian Dillon's *Is F for Fake?* (2008).

"What exactly do we mean when we call an artist or writer a charlatan? ... The accusation points to something far more fundamental than a simple waywardness with the facts."

"What it names, precisely, is a deficit of sincerity: this is what the critic Hilton Kramer was referring to in 1966 when he spoke of Duchamp's 'resplendent triviality'. The charlatan does not set out to peddle mistruths about the world, but rather does not really mean or does not really believe in the work that he or she makes. This suggests a rather Romantic notion, a conception of artistic being as truth-to-self, which has survived into an era otherwise attuned to auto-invention and to celebration of the type of the trickster in popular culture and the avant-garde alike. In a sense it's an objection to style, to surface, to those artists who do things for effect. (As though there were some higher value in art than its effects.) But the charlatan-wrangler objects just as regularly to apparent depth: for him no profundity is deep enough to be safe from the shallows of insufficient sincerity. In fact, self-evident profundity would be almost a definition of obvious charlatanism; real depth is harder-won."

"In the realms of art and literature it is either insouciance or (oddly) excessive labour that will earn the accusation of charlatanism. On the one hand – as with Duchamp's ready-mades, Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1998) or Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The Lights Going On and Off* (2000) – the artist-charlatan is popularly accused of having done very little, almost nothing, to constitute the work in the first place, or of freighting a flimsy artefact with a weight of meaning it cannot bear. On the other hand, the charlatan works too hard, produces an elaborate opus – prodigious in terms of its size or scope, the time and effort expended in its making – that yields scarcely any significance. (James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939) remains the exemplary instance.) Sometimes, as in the case of Gertrude Stein's experimental texts, both circumstances obtain: her novel-of-sorts *The Making of Americans* (1906) is both dauntingly long and apparently written with no care for sense."

"In philosophy the charlatan may also be thought to have formulated an over-complex system, or to have coined a needlessly obscure vocabulary that hides an essential poverty at the level of the concept. This was certainly one of the charges levelled at Jacques Derrida by the many academics who objected to his being awarded an honorary degree at Cambridge in 1992. But the more fundamental objection was that Derrida had undermined the very notion of philosophical truth. That he had done no such thing was really beside the point: what mattered was that his thoroughgoing philosophical scepticism was in itself perceived as a form of charlatanism. The unmasker, so his opponents claimed, was in reality masked – he possessed, as the philosophical journalist A.C. Grayling put it recently, 'a dishonest mind'."

"The phrase is almost too telling. It suggests that Grayling – and those who point and shout 'Charlatan!' in general – values some occult level of philosophical sincerity above truth itself. He imagines there are other thinkers who really mean it and are therefore axiomatically better thinkers. This is a kind of willed ignorance of the extent to which philosophy has always relied on what Gilles Deleuze called 'conceptual personae': the idiot, the sceptic, the dandy, the melancholic, even the charlatan himself – quasi-fictional stand-ins for the philosopher. It is to assume, as Brian Eno once put it, 'that there is such a thing as the "real" people, and the pretenders. And the other assumption is that there's something wrong with pretending.'"

"...Of course, in contemporary art the figure of the faker is in part just one persona among many that the artist may choose to deploy, a now canonical role to be embraced rather than disavowed. Abject sincerity is equally a career choice of sorts. How to tell the difference between the two? Why exactly would one want to tell the difference between the two? The charlatan, in fact, embodies both: he is the artist who convinces and infuriates in equal measure, who makes a spectacle of his sincerity, turns authenticity into pure performance. ...As the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips has written, 'the masked are always great unmaskers'. The sceptic and the charlatan formed the perfect partnership, because they both knew that 'the honest, if they are to pursue the truth, must be sufficiently competent at dishonesty'" (Dillon 2008: sp).



**people; concurrent events; politics; censorship**

Highlighted comments posted on the IOL online newsfeed subsequently removed by the sub-editors.

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 15:13:41

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Senior Cape ANC members walk

**Sections** :Politics|South Africa|Breaking News

**16637**: submitted by **SuperDave** 3 Days ago

I've seen a LOT of black people being promoted at my company. Then they get a bigger paycheck, bigger title, and suddenly they resign! Mostly looking for even MORE money!!! At least white's have some sense of loyalty towards the company(and dont give me that "get a dog" crap!). Doesn't surprise me if companies think twice before promoting them. Some just give them more money.

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 14:51:34

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Crass black people are the enemy'

**Sections** :South Africa|General|Finance/ Labour|Breaking News

**16536**: submitted by **Geyser** 3 Days ago

If the ANC is genuine about solving the countries' problems then they should immediately initiate investigations into corruption and personal enrichment of the BEE directors and BEE projects such as Gautrain, 2010 contracts, Coega etc. Investigate why we are in a deficit and trace all the money that BEE and other local corporations have spirited out the country. Surely Shilowa, Moleketi, Phumizile and others have been involved in various companies that have received huge contracts that were never scrutinized. Scrutinize all land deals and buy back the coastal and prime lands sold to foreigners.

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 11:48:31

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Mbeki's prophecy...

**Sections** :Politics|South Africa|Breaking News

**16490**: submitted by **The Flying Sikh** 3 Days ago

"Mr J Zuma (Mr Arms deal and Shaik's Friend)", What about Viv Reddy, he seems to be on board the ANC "Curry gravy Train". Viva Terror and Uncle Sam

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 09:01:49

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :ANC may push for early poll

**Sections** :Politics|South Africa|Breaking News

**16442**: submitted by **Stuart from Pittsburgh, USA** 4 Days ago

The current ANC leadership are a bunch of morons who do not understand what democracy is. These clowns have brought a once well respected organization into question. Zuma is deafening by his silence on what is taking place. In addition to this, I and many other people understand that Zuma DOES NOT HAVE THE EDUCATION to deal with the problems facing the country. The guy should go back to herding cattle.

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-17 08:35:35

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Looks like Luke is an ex-Bok'

**Sections** :Sport|Rugby|Springboks|Breaking News

**16754**: submitted by **bok proud** 2 Days ago

he has no code he no honour he must just go, maybe he can go play with his mate khompela, oops sorry pukey boy khompela hates whites so you lose out there too LOL

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-17 08:21:16

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Looks like Luke is an ex-Bok'

**Sections** :Sport|Rugby|Springboks|Breaking News

**16737**: submitted by **Themvikile** 3 Days ago

We should not insult the ANC leader Jacob Zuma becoz if he get to Power in next erections then he will give us all JZ shampoo so we also dont get aids! Lekotha you start you new party and we support you! If you wan be strong then you join force with DA and IFP. I dont want say to much coz Malema mite come and kill me!

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 18:26:28

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :ANC voters won't like new party'

**Sections** :Politics|South Africa|Breaking News

**16669**: submitted by **AntiBlackDiamond** 3 Days ago

Anti\_Springbok: Why do you people breed like rabbits even though you have no money? You like to complain about how many brothers/sisters/whatever you have that depends on you. We white people on the other hand, won't have more children than we can afford.

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 15:24:53

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Crass black people are the enemy'

**Sections** :South Africa|General|Finance/ Labour|Breaking News

**16662**: submitted by **Anonymous** 3 Days ago

To Anti\_Springbok - how dare you make generalisations. Because a person is white does not make him advantaged or rich. I am in my 50's and have never been given special treatment for anything. I too ,as have many white South Africans, battled through the years. My parents were not wealthy, I have never been given a car or have a trust fund. BUT I have never hi jacked anyone, murdered, raped or stolen and used my ethnicity as an excuse. Have pride in yourself, make sure you better yourself and stop using your ethnicity as an excuse to get handouts. After all whose fault is that Contraception was not used. No one forced your parents to keep producing babies.

Approve Remove

**Last Modified** : 2008-10-16 15:16:43

**Status** : Removed |

**Story name** :Crass black people are the enemy'

**Sections** :South Africa|General|Finance/ Labour|Breaking News

**16659**: submitted by **Thabu Nketini** 3 Days ago

I am so glad those fat cats are at each others throats...Go Boys!!!!...they are either raping their women, stealing from the arms deal, denying reality, vomiting on Springbok jerseys, chasing qualified workers away, protecting African dictators ..... no wonder Noah cursed them!

Approve Remove



artists vs. real people;  
positions (artist)

(Right) plastic toys with enamel.

**bad form; big Other; symbolic registration; states of being (dynamic); play; dead ends; research; process; slips**

(Below) loose thoughts on Bad Form.

*Judgment which takes place on behalf of the big Other –*

*'it is considered bad form...' should read, 'It is considered that it is considered to be bad form' – example of a disheveled man warming his hands at the fire in Da Vinci's pizzeria in Kloof Street (the man and his hands were only the locus for a discomfort assumed on everyone else's behalf, the restaurateurs were uncomfortable as they anticipated the customers' discomfort and the customers were uncomfortable as they anticipated the actions of the restaurant, the man was removed and everyone relaxed).*

*Symbolic registration absolves the subject from that which is considered to be considered to be bad form (an open acknowledgement that you were wrong). In this arena of additions/perversions – slight, subtle, distasteful perversions can be smuggled past the big Other (perversions that do not destroy the possibility of form altogether).*

*Bad form is still within the arena of form (bad form is the opposite of good form, house is not the opposite of black).*

*But should it be acknowledged? There is something within the process (in terms of the Bad Form project) that is lacking, can an unfortunate slip or grimace be ignored or must it be excused/apologized for (as it is noticed by the observer so it is noticed by the big Other). Can it still function or will it be rejected entirely, how can this dynamic (of constant slips and constant apologies) be exploited/performed?*

*Additional texts (as problematic supplements) could form this apology (or not), in Unmonumental (New Museum) the slick packaging apologized for the bad form of the works themselves – rather than condemning this (turning shit into gold (Fraser)) it could be seen as a useful strategy for giving us a bigger prison cell – BUT – it does not come cheap...*

*Giving and receiving – works that are discourteous in their perversion of the offer*

*Dead ends: (a critical examination of context of 'random' as a signifier)*

*Linking/referring as an act*

*Understanding the google search (manual processing parameters)*

*Re thinking thinking*

*forging links*

*There is an opportunity in the ambiguity of forging links. It all links in with randomness, google generated thought processes, the internet as a substitution for the brain, hierarchies of logic, objective rationality and form, contingent production/practice, and more (there is a thread here, sufficiently tentative and unsecured) from dead end clues to rethinking understanding/thought etc. etc. etc. – very fractured at this stage but there is something (or nothing) brewing.*

*"We are against scraps of paper" (Bataille in Roudinesco 1997: 134).*



artists vs. real people;  
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**Nelson Mandela; truth; conscientious objection; South African art history; research; bad form; art; making; process; complexity; architecture; weak logic; Paul Cilliers; Neil Goedhals; Barend de Wet; Max Wolpe; Shelley Sacks; James Reed; Robbie Williams; Ed Young; Kristofer Paetau; Willem Boshoff; if things were simple word would have gotten around; architecture (exedra); artists vs. real people; reinventing the wheel; Vito Acconci; Robert Storr**

Loose transcription of a conversation between Kathryn Smith, Christian Nerf and Francis Burger. The conversation followed a proposal by Jonathon Garnham of Blank Projects to Smith and Nerf to curate a show titled 'Bad Form'. Initially intended as the opening show of the Blank Projects' new location in Woodstock, Cape Town, the project was delayed indefinitely after renovations and quarrels with the landlord prolonged the space's relocation. An offshoot of the project was, titled *Things and Stuff*, was presented at the Johannesburg Art Fair in 2009.

#### The minutes (20/10/08)

History of doing nothing (Bartelby).	Drinking at blank – coupons/tickets (bartering)
Doing exactly what everyone else is doing vs. doing nothing	POPULAR OPPOSITES art and not art, monumental unmonumental, bad form, good form
Ed Young vs Pierre Bismuth	Being committed to form
Serious but not solemn	Robert Storr – misconceptualism, idea art without an idea [1]
Works from the collection (national gallery)	The seminar was a load of rubbish
Lucas' bed and broken Joseph Beuys sculpture	What is it to be an ethical person
Social sculpture, Shelley sacks, James Reed	Not reducing complexity to simplicity
Letter of agreement – offsite exhibitions	Philosophy
Censorship	Paul Cilliers modest positions (philosophical interactions) (modesty, though it is not weak, is too nice – finding a balance somewhere between being nice and being a total asshole)
Thinking about it when you can no longer see it (does the unattainable (international) object need to be there other than by its suggestion?)	The tables must be able to be turned
Talking pieces vs. conversation pieces	Bartelby – being utterly anti social without taking anyone down with you – signing off (I can no longer do anything because what you are doing is not worth anything)
Series of shows that cemented memory/identity, from the collective to the personal – propaganda	Neil Goedhals
The original Nelson Mandela's view of the window (there was no fucking view)	The real death of Neil – the monsters/market are simplifying him (or rather packaging/commodifying him) Could he really have been the only person?
Nelson Mandela signature machine	Finding local examples of works made what is retrospectively recognized as a canon (international focus) – But not making them out to be more than they are
Sanctioned dissonance	Food
HONESTY as bad form	Spaces – because they existed they generated other spaces
honesty room	Focusing on the seemingly inconsequential act/event/work/individual that is seen in retrospect as one of the triggers that generated a context/scene/event – emphasizing the
If we can do this properly ...	
Andrew Lamprecht – turning around the paintings, taking away the art (flip)	
Giving and receiving – excess as an apology	

need for unsustainable spaces (that start conversations/movement) and/or how to sustain these spaces (even through resurrection)

Show is generated from the back room – processed and reconfigured

Crayfish samoosas

Airtime and duchamp – no.15 – never felt the need to make shit

"the work is for the artists' PHD" Aaron Schuster 'some rules' (Frieze May 2008).

The junkie vs the bank manager (if you could have one hour with the bank manager.....why is it that your child does not smile?)

Sensitivity to what is classed as bad form –

Critically problematize the Gugulethu as a collective – their value as a collective might be their only value – the work is the gugulethu

creating a space for taboo discussions

speaking out of turn

What you think and what you say

The most important thing to ask an artist is why do you do what you're doing?

Artists are people too: separation from the real world and the absolution of participation (and therefore of guilt)

Inciting participating (how to skirt the problem of 'submission')

The labradoodle

Do we even have the excuse of distraction?

Post-passion

Curiosity vs studied boredom

Random – random generation – Google searching

Everything in the gaps – discovery

(maybe I can be part of discovering it)

(ARCHEOLOGY AND THE DIG)

Vito Acconci and the art object

(bringing down the name of art in the name of bad form)

words that mean nothing

Random is the new original (the sedimentation of postmodern ideals)

Interrogating randomness (emo phenomenon or.....)

Relinquishing the name of the author vs. lazy trend of investigation (questioning our own ideas of what constitutes form, or rather, substance)

The internet as a giant brain

Randomness as a facet of complexity (facet of our own 'generative' process)

Works that temper the discovery wow factor (either offer or take away the discovery)

Certain things are not worth questioning (the system is the system)

Reinventing the wheel

The hole and the missing south african art world

Lack of conception of the continuation/generation of a scene (how contingent events – processes contribute to the formation of a scene)

Generating an energetic/productive space (without the premise of producing good form or working for the man) reframing PRODUCTIVITY How to reposition the idea of work – working on Sundays

Pierre Bismuth (Jean Matthee) Seemingly doing nothing, but doing something all the time, rotating room model (with vanishing furniture)

Talking too loudly about doing nothing

Multilingual jungle book

The magic of Barend de Wet (the violent response)

Maya and the radios

Bipolar as an involuntary writing strategy  
Mormons – bombs

Laibach – NSK pure and applied philosophy and satanic techno

Life is life

Becoming the demon other that you yourself construct  
(2000 AD comic)

Firefox poetry

East art map

View from the punk/electro new space venue (looking for  
space to work) seeing the Mediterranean (the view)

Galaxy style map (links – thread) (mind map) (art  
cardboard) generated both digitally and manually  
beyond the seductive aesthetic of the formula

How to generate a similar response to Irwin's poster project  
(beezezy bailey)

the untranslatability of the other

Repositioning objects

Evita's new political party

Die groot krokodil

People in glass houses shouldn't make art – vitrines

I am still alive (to Sol le Witt) – if they kill me (from Lenin)

Exhibiting works and their processes – or using the works  
themselves as triggers

Authentic objects that have been performed – Trasi Henen

Sustaining the level of energy – not allowing anything to  
finalize itself or be resolved without generating weightless  
content/dumb noise

Pulling from the past and projecting into the future

Inconclusivity

Kristoffer Pateau

Dirk Uys Faggot

Transsexuals

Spunk Sieppel's remaining canvas

Approaching the heavies

NSK African words (church square monuments as  
punctuation marks)

Willem Boshoff's I have a big problem with... (saying ugly  
things in good form)

## NOTHING IS OBVIOUS

Minumentals

Santarama, Wemmer pan, hunting grounds for the hammer  
man

Scaring people from the advertising industry

Immediate plan of action: expand on the list of artists, studio  
visits

In the face of a rampant marketplace, do secret histories still  
exist?

Max Wolpe

WHY?

Censorship

Live forever documentary (understanding Robbie Williams)

[1] Robert Storr on misconceptualism in contrast to the  
'intellectual and artistic clarity' of Lawrence Weiner and  
Kara Walker;

"Let's just call it misconceptualism. You know it when you  
see it, and you see it everywhere in art exhibitions, at art  
fairs and – first alert! – in art academies, where it incubates  
like a low-grade infection in the hidden recesses of seminar  
rooms, nourishing itself on inarticulate obscurities fostered  
by the 'strong' misreading and/or helpless misunderstanding  
of critical discourse. It is idea art without an idea, identity  
art without an identity, the 'Oh wow!' school of 1960s'  
philosophy and politics updated for the 2000s, the spawn  
of bone-headedness and the bon mot. Misconceptualism  
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scholastics, and, as a result of an ever-growing labour force  
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long, contentious season one looks back with heightened  
appreciation at moments of intellectual and artistic clarity.  
In a period when the 'interrogation of the subject' so often  
descends into essentialism and solipsism one is grateful  
when questions addressed to the viewer acknowledge  
that both the viewer and the questioner are possessed  
of a complex consciousness. And in a context where  
'misconceptualism' grabs headlines, causing the talkers to  
talk ad nauseam, one seeks dialogue that lends existential  
substance to weightless ideas" (Storr 2008: sp)



fire

(Right) balsa wood,  
match-head and  
enamel.

positions (god);  
architecture (podium)

(Left) liquid plastic cross.

(top right) B.B.74.6.  
(bottom left) B.B.74.3.



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positions (god);  
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(Left) liquid plastic cross.



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pornography; disappointment; funny stuff

(Above) DVD chronicling the adventure of a young woman and her exploits as she learns the customs of a village in an undisclosed part of rural China.



oneiric house; repetition

(Above) notebook drawing.



announcements to the universe; fight fight fight

(Above) undersized loud-speaker.  
Received from Friitha Langerman.

artists vs. real people; institutional critique vs. institutionalised critique; politics; misery

(Below) notes from return presentation at Michaelis on Taipei Drift (a ten-day workshop for art students and academics hosted by the Taiwan University of the Arts which ran concurrently to the Taipei Biennial). (Participation and travel sponsored by the Michaelis School of Fine Art).

What happened?

photographs; campus tour; feast; prostitutes; lepers.

Minor local concerns (wooing the international community).

Strange sense of showing off problems (bus taken from a leper colony (sanatorium) to the house of an immigrant prostitute).

The underbelly before the surface. (How to share localised polemics without making the visitor feel like a missionary?)

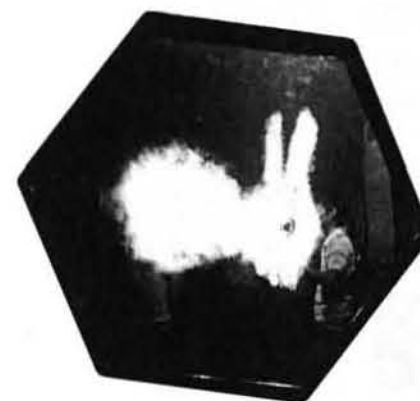
No obvious radical division between rich and poor – giant middle class – polite and safe.

Art and activism at the Taipei Biennial; at what point does institutional critique become institutionalised critique?

Discrepancy between the proposal made by the organisers and the reality of the workshop (hotel regalees, bus curtains etc).

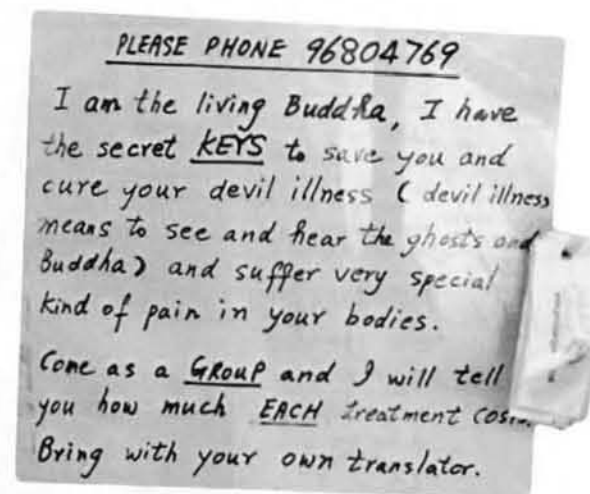
(Below) excerpt from a summary of presentations at the end of the Taipei Drift workshop posted on the Taipei Drift blog (<http://2008.taipeidrft.blogspot.com>) by one of the student organisers.

Francis keeps an eye on astray pets on the street. There are thousands of astray cat, dog and many kinds of pets on the street in Taipei. Francis takes pictures and make them into a comic-like photos. Astray pets can talk in that way and impress themselves.



duck-rabbit; Ludwig Wittgenstein; truth;  
hunger art; body (eye)

(Above) rotating image of a duck-rabbit  
exhibited at a small museum of oddities in a  
Taipei market.



doctors; positions (parousiamaniac)

(Above) flyer posted on a shop-window in Hong-Kong.

# ITS BETTER TO LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE

He was a good friend and I loved him like one of my own.



Outdoor: When I looked again I realized that I should not have been any of this, it was as if the whole world started spinning. I never got back what I lost that day.

Dark form: When questioned, he starts talking when you mention it, but it won't work if you don't know the full story.

More: I just thought it would have been better to say something rather than nothing. But you know what they say!



let's get stupid; funny stuff; language (word games); animals (dog); public performance; space-time (striated)

(Above) posters printed and stuck up around Taipei.

is that in the case of art, there is always the possibility of the project becoming too conclusive

I think that part of the problem, as he suggested interests of the distance that of the you yourself gained from your own work in this context, with the president and the lights and the gallery— is that within the sort of subject area that all of this work is based, activism as art or vice versa, the best, most exciting examples are those that become more than art, they cannot be explained away as art, they illicit a far more complex response. That's potentially why art + activism will always be a question, because at its best it doesn't matter whether it's art, it makes it more complex as a story, the police + part of the actually just weren't interested once they know it also art!

to understand what an of this really is, it's a complex thing doing inside. How did the political gain? It's a guy! It's a guy! It's a guy!

and also what I'd like to add, is that the discrepancy between us + them is probably a problem only a reason to save them. MAYBE THEY WANT TO BE STUPID?!

do you not think that these sort of protest protests because used of a reinforcement, an obscure support for that which is being criticized?

it's anything more —

Noel Douglas: David Harvey of neo-liberalism. A brief history of neo-liberalism. Such profits & principles — is there a choice? Bakhtin: live in a system — lined by language (but the treat later) Voloshinov: does divide (but the treat later) capitalist class — restricting meanings

artists vs. real people; activism; art; Taipei Biennial; truth; lies; institutional critique vs. institutionalised critique

Excerpt from notes taken during the Taipei Biennial.



*slapstick; let's get stupid; animals (dog); funny stuff; what happens when nothing happens*

Stills from a cellphone video of America's Funniest Home Videos shown on Pearl (the English channel in Hong Kong).

Anybody can become an NSK Passport bearer and acquire the status of an NSK citizen. The NSK state denies in its fundamental acts the categories of (limited) territory, the principle of national borders, and advocates the law of transnationality.

The bearer of the NSK passport becomes a citizen of NSK. Vital statistics of the bearer are logged in the NSK citizenship register.

The passport is numbered and untransferable; its validity is limited and renewable. By signing the statement the bearer pledges to participate on a best-effort basis to support the integrity of the NSK State. This passport may not be misused for criminal, ideological, religious or political purposes conflicting with the contents of NSK and/or jeopardizing the reputation and good name of NSK. Citizenship ceases with the expiration, return or confiscation of the passport.

The passport is a document of subversive nature and unique value. A bearer fills in data and stamps, signatures, etc., in it at NSK events and similar campaigns. In this sense, the applicability of the passport is unlimited and subject to the responsibility of its bearer.

Note: NSK citizenship does not imply NSK membership

#### IMPORTANT MESSAGE

The NSK State was founded in 1992 by members of the Neue Slowenische Kunst informal organisation.

The NSK State holds the status of a virtual state without physical territory, and does not exist in the real, three-dimensional space. Its sole territory is time.

Owning the NSK State passport does not grant citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia or any other country of the world within coordinates of physical territory.

The NSK State passport does not facilitate legal passing of concrete international borders.

NSK State Information Centre



PRICE OF NSK PASSPORT: 24 EUR

PAYMENT:

- to our account:

Društvo NSK info, Center NLB d.d., Branch Ljubljana Center

Trg republike 1, 1520 Ljubljana, Slovenia

IBAN: SE56 0201 0001 8373 512, SWIFT code: LJBSAS2X

All costs of bank transfers are covered by the applicant.

(No passport will be issued, if the sum received by the issuer is insufficient.

and no refund will be given.)

- cash with registered letter

- IMO's (payable to Društvo NSK info, Center)

Enclose proof of payment with the application form!

We ask you for your permission to use your NSK passport Application Form for all kinds of artistic projects and public use without limitation in time, territory and scope.

Yes

No

Signature:

**NSK; politics; freedom; lies; misery; architecture (empire); space-time (smooth); positions (scoundrel)**

Reverse side of NSK State passport application form, a project initiated by the informal artist run organisation, Neue Slowenische Kunst. Initiated and enacted globally since 1992, participants are able to apply online or at a temporary NSK embassy for a citizenship and a passport made using second-hand tools from a Slovene council office. Video footage of interviews with the organisers and various bearers of the passport shown alongside an NSK booth at the Taipei Biennial provided accounts from Bosnian passport bearers who had used the NSK passport in conjunction with their regular passports to leave Bosnia "at a time when [their] Bosnian passports were looked upon with suspicion and general negativity" to positive effect. The footage also showed the organisers (also members of the artists' collective IRWIN) discussing the unwieldy influx of applications in 2001 from Nigerian citizens after a series of unidentified individuals began selling the NSK passports as legitimate travel documents to their unsuspecting countrymen. The group subsequently installed an NSK embassy in Nigeria for a limited period and imposed a 24 Euro fee on online applications.



*Bianca Baldi; love; sentiment; interaction; desire; fantasy; body (mouth)*

Documentation of *Him & Her*, 2008. A performance/installation orchestrated by Bianca Baldi at Blank Projects involving a vintage Fiat *seicento* with two actors locked in a passionate embrace on the back seat for the duration of the exhibition opening.



*knife-holder; pricks*

Miniature plastic knife and holster.



Slavoj Žižek; psychoanalysis; superego; objet petit a; body (flesh); body (genitals); voice; rotten nature; desire; homeless objects; pungency; failure; A vs. B; things that come too quickly; the perspective of the last judgement; language (as surface); voice (the voice that skins the body)

Excerpts from Slavoj Žižek's *The Metastases of Enjoyment, Six essays on Women and Causality* (italics indicate rough paraphrasing and notes to self).

"In so far as we are living in the universe of language, we are condemned to this imbecility of the superego: we can assume a minimal distance towards it, thus rendering it more bearable, but we can never be rid of it" (Žižek 1994: 64).

Short circuit between external and internal negation – "the external negation of our obligation to do D is that we do not have to do D; the internal negation is that we have to do non-D" (65). Short circuit between non-obligation and prohibition. "Officially, criticism is not only allowed but invited, yet everyone knows that only 'constructive' – that is to say, no criticism, is actually tolerated" (65).

"The underlying structure of such a short circuit involves a kind of psychotic distortion of the 'semiotic square' of necessity, possibility, impossibility and contingency: in a perfect 'totalitarian' universe we deal only with necessity and impossibility. A contingent decision of Leadership passes itself off as an expression of historical Necessity, which is why every form of resistance to such a decision – although formally possible – is actually impossible, that is, prohibited. This distortion thus gives rise to the paradox of the forced choice, according to which we are actually only allowed to choose one of two options, the other one remaining an empty set ... and it is this same short circuit that provides the most elementary definition of the superego: the superego is a law 'run amok' in so far as it prohibits what it formally permits" (66).

The Lacanian maxim "do not give up your desire" is different to the superego's command 'Enjoy!' (68)

The Kantian injunction: 'renounce your desire since it is not Universalizable!' (69)

Aldous Huxley, *The Grey Eminence* (80)

"The voice that skins the body": The ominous hum as the camera zooms into and under the grass in the opening scene of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (Lynch's noise) (115). The noise of life, subterranean insects. Disgust at sexuality (William Holman Hunt's *The Hireling Shepherd*) and putrid "overripe nature", flowers bearing their genitals and their pungent pheromones (113).

Skin and underneath – "relating to the body implies suspending what goes on beneath the surface. This suspension is an effect of the symbolic order; it can occur only in so far as our bodily reality is structured by language. In the symbolic order, even when we are undressed, we are not really naked, since skin itself functions as the 'dress of the flesh'. This suspension excludes the Real of the life-substance, its palpitation: one of the definitions of the Lacanian Real is that it is the flayed body, the palpitation of the raw, skinless red flesh" (116). (Music video for Robbie Williams' *Rock DJ*, where the singer strips down layer by layer until he is only a skeleton).

Stoicism?

Meinong, Alexis: 'theory of objects'

Sosein – being-thus and Sein – being

Round square has it's sosein, but not sein

Homeless objects – objects that cannot exist

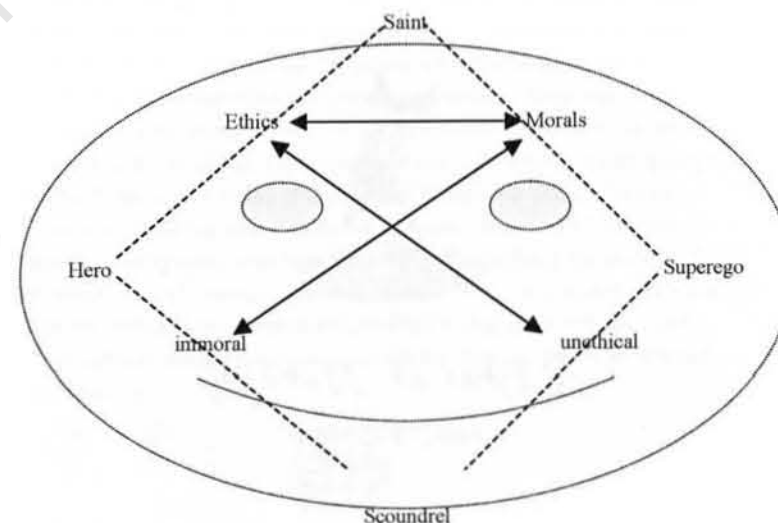
Objects that could, but don't exist – golden mountain – it is their non-being that exists (123).

Similar to Wittgenstein's distinction between: "things and the world as the entirety of facts, of everything that is the case, that can occur: 'Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen, nicht der dinge.' In his preface which is usually reprinted with *Tractatus*, Bertrand Russell endeavours precisely to domesticate this 'homelessness' of the event by means of reinscribing the event back into the order of things" (124).

"Rather than a pure 'this', the object without properties, [the *objet petit a*] is a bundle of properties that lacks existence" (179).

Stephen Jay Gould, *lacanian biologist*, long term tendency in the relationship between price and quantity of Hershey chocolate bars... "zig zag with a slight tendency to decline... by extrapolating this tendency to its senseless extreme, we can calculate not only the moment when the quantity will reach zero – that is, when we will get a nicely wrapped void – but also how much this void will cost. This void – which, nonetheless, is nicely wrapped and has a definite price – is an almost perfect metaphor for the Lacanian *objet petit a*" (179).

Hegel and teleology – end as a means to the means (189).



Slavoj Žižek; superego; positions (saint); positions (hero); positions (scoundrel); ethics; desire

Illustration (above) after Slavoj Žižek's (1994:67) diagram showing the interactions and oppositions between saints, scoundrels, heroes and the superego as well as between ethics and morals (see quote below).

"At the top and bottom we have two flat positions: the saint is ethical (he does not compromise his desire) and moral (he considers the Good of others), whereas the scoundrel is immoral (he violates moral norms) and unethical (what he is after is not desire but pleasures and profits so he lacks any firm principles). Far more interesting are the two horizontal positions expressing an inherent antagonism: the hero is immoral, yet ethical, that is to say, he violates (or rather suspends the validity of) existing explicit moral norms in the name of a higher ethics of life, historical Necessity, and so on, whereas superego designates the very opposite of the hero, an unethical moral Law, a Law in which the obscene enjoyment sticks to obedience of the moral norms (say, a severe teacher who torments his pupil for the sake of their own good, and is not ready to acknowledge his own sadistic investment in this torment)" (Žižek 1994: 67).

art as a question; meaninglessness; meaning; enjoyment; wheeling about with one foot nailed to the ground; dead ends; something to believe in; you lose your faith; psychoanalysis; gentrification

(Below and following pages) *Master of Nothing* (2008), seminar paper presented as part of the Master of Fine Arts' seminar program at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts.



## Master of Nothing.

Francis Burger

Supervisor: Fritha Langerman

Respondent: David Scadden

Additional keywords are listed sporadically underneath illustrated page spreads. Duplicate page numbers and footnote numbers correspond to the text independently. Appendix B (*when I was a boy*) and C (illustrated propositions for planned works or works in progress) have been removed owing to the repetition of their contents elsewhere in the chronology.

## Masters of what?



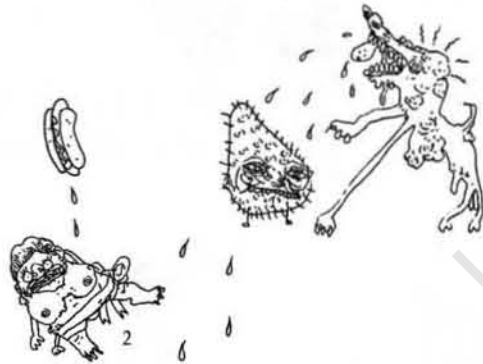
Before anything else I think that it is important to take a brief moment to consider the demands of the immediate context for which this paper and its promises are being produced, a masters in fine art. Since the beginning of the year I have encountered various fragments of deliberation, ranging from hearsay to published texts, regarding the validity of art production within a specifically post-graduate academic context. What is it that is expected? Or rather, what is it that is expected to be expected? Unless I have missed something, there is an amount of confusion attached to this question. In my understanding, the space that the university officially affords as an institution is first and foremost an open space that practically allows an intensity of criticism and thought that would otherwise not be possible. What I am unsure of, however, is whether or not the University, specifically with regard to the humanities and more specifically the arts, officially expects a practical outcome. Either way, whether it does or it doesn't, there is an inherent conflict between what is proposed by the ideal of criticality as a valid (financially remunerable) endeavor in itself and what is expected to be expected (an outcome).



productive confusion



Discussing the shift from public or state funding to corporate funding of art museums in the eighties and nineties in the United States, Andrea Fraser (2002: 213) describes how the 'public' became the 'market'. Driven predominantly by the practical demands of "competition and growth...art for art's sake was replaced by growth for art's sake".<sup>1</sup> Though it is questionable whether art, or indeed anything for its own sake has ever been a viable or worthwhile venture, the promise of the university today is nevertheless anomalous in this regard. Perhaps precisely *because* it is nothing more than a business with a particularly effective, broadminded corporate identity or manifesto; the university sustains a belief in itself as an institution that values thinking, learning, and research in and of itself. Often perceived as a somewhat illegitimate child (they send you money, you don't bother them), art as a subject occupies an even more (or less) opportune position in this regard. Presenting the option of a practice that is able to openly and honestly prioritize research over outcome, and to resist the urge to transform what is at best a highly contingent process, "hybrid, sensuous and critically reflective in equal parts" (Biggs 2006: 7), into a product.<sup>2</sup> Whether this engenders a practice that is more or less useful is open to debate.



Andrea Fraser; Ian Biggs; money; what is contemporary art worth?



William Pope.L, *Levitating the magnesium*. 1992. Three day performance. Horodner Romley Gallery, New York. (Bessire 2002: 213)

William Pope.L; what happens when nothing happens

## Master of Nothing

One of the aims of the process that I intend to explicate here and develop throughout my masters, though I won't mention it in this way again, is to determine whether or not I can become the master of nothing. In other words, is it possible (am I able) to articulate and sustain a practice that functions in conflict with, constantly engaging and undermining, the very beliefs that maintain its legitimacy. To an extent, this investigation holds in its heart the intent to forge an even broader space within the already generous field of relevance within art, more so within the academy and the initiative of art as research, and to debate whether the idea of relevance is itself relevant. Whether meaning is in fact meaningful, and whether this, in the end, is of any consequence whatsoever. Though this may seem to be an attempt at subversion, an idealistic insurrection of self-incurred values which are then posited as the convictions of a target audience, it isn't. As an alternative, and this may be giving away too much too soon, I am more inclined towards the position of a voluntarily "institutionalized prisoner", who, as Tom Morton (2005: 206) explains, does not desire liberty at all, "but rather a bigger cell, a better tobacco allowance and more accommodating wardens", adding that "if the prison bars are spaced far enough apart, even the shrewdest inmate will begin to believe that he is free".

Taking full advantage of the 'sensuous' space that artistic practice as research affords, there are various expected expectations, or rather, imagined contractual obligations, that I would like to circumvent. The deliberations that follow provide an explanation and illustration of the logistics of this intention. At the same time, as both a doomed performative and an explanation of my practice, the composition and structure of this text will also be an attempt to put the ideas within it to work.

4

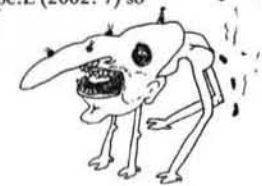
*positions (institutionalised prisoner); Tom Morton*

## Why meaninglessness?

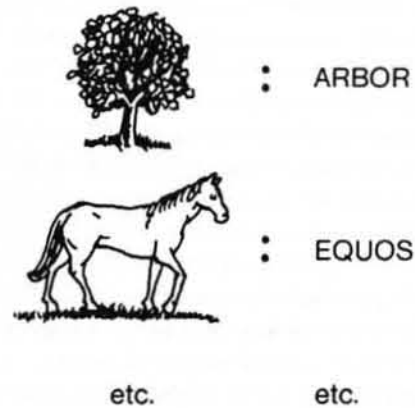
At this point it is possible to confer the connotations of what has until this point been referred to as 'outcome', 'viability', 'relevance' and 'legitimacy' to the term meaning. In a self-referential system of ideas, signifiers, fantasies, obligations, convictions and beliefs (etc.) meaning takes an inevitably central, internal role.<sup>3</sup> Used to construct everything from our *imago*<sup>4</sup> to garbanzos<sup>5</sup>, meaning appears initially as a neutral medium, complex, yet domestic. As a concept, the use of the word 'meaning' needs to be framed here in reference to its affixations 'ful', or 'less', and also, as a result, in terms of its gentrification.

In its affirmative form (*meaningful*) meaning becomes that which supersedes the trivialities and banalities of our everyday existence, subsuming events, thoughts, experiences and phenomena into a consumable, enjoyable and purposed format. Operating in a similar way to what psychoanalytic philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2006b: 66) describes as the "perfect 'totalitarian' universe, where "a *contingent* decision of Leadership passes itself off as an expression of historical *Necessity*", the psychic space afforded by the meaningful is opposed to contingency and impossibility. If you don't like your memories or lack thereof you may rewrite them into a teleological narrative leading up right up to the present and even into the future; failure is always intentional and as such, meaninglessness is impossible. While the meaningful belongs to those experiences in life that stand out, those stories that get told and retold, to the constructors, to God and to the midnight oil, the pejorative meaningless belongs to nothing, since death and the universe have no interest in acquisition. As opposed to the meaningful and superficially to meaning itself, *meaningless* is simply derivative. Nothing, of course, can actually be meaningless. The affix 'less' does not designate an absence, only a lack. And as the 'friendliest black artist in America©' William Pope.L (2002: 7) so compellingly asserts "lack is a value worth having".

5



*lack; imago; Jacques Lacan*



The arbitrary nature of the sign  
(de Saussure 1983: 97)

6

Ferdinand de Saussure; language (the arbitrary nature of the sign)

In choosing meaninglessness, one of the temptations that emerges is to label it as an anarchic dissolution of law and order, an audacious carnival of impudence – a free, fun, and silly space. As will be discussed more extensively below, this is just another way of reinscribing meaning with the meaningful. The performance that the meaningless elicits is better analogized by Samuel Beckett (quoted in Deleuze 1995: 6), as a "head sunk on crippled hands...skull alone in a dark place pent bowed on a board...hands and head a little heap" who, while waiting for silence and death tells himself stories, but in vain. "Each of the stories break down into tedium – 'this is awful' the voice says, 'what tedium'" (Critchley 2004: 193).

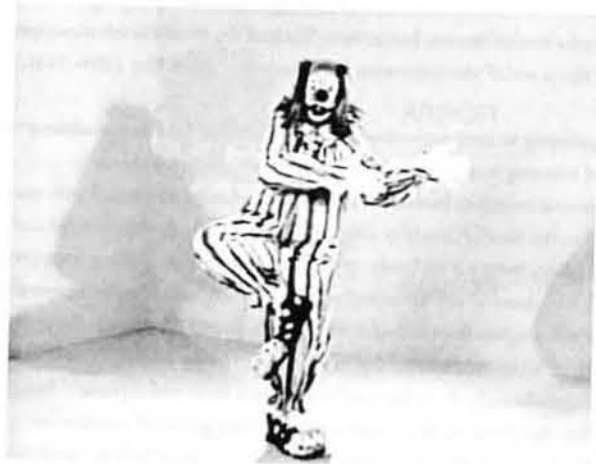
While acquiescing to meaninglessness performs a disjuncture that invalidates the meaning of meaning it cannot drive meaning out altogether. Instead, meaninglessness incites an incessant circling that "wheel[s] about as if with one foot nailed to the floor" (Critchley 2004: 196), constantly moving around and around meaning, testing it endlessly, trying it on this or that, shifting its approach, attempting to exhaust it and never succeeding.<sup>6</sup> Having torn open an irreparable cavity, the meaningless does not offer even the slightest respite from the pressures of meaning, or what Simon Critchley in *Very Little...Almost Nothing* (2004: xxii) somewhat optimistically describes as a "redemption from redemption".<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, rather than bringing the ceaseless comings and goings of words to an abrupt halt, the meaningless provokes a relentless barrage of hollow questions and inconsequential reformulations.<sup>8</sup> Spurred on by anxiety (which is, as Žižek (in Fiennes, 2006) maintains along with Freud, the only emotion that doesn't deceive) the meaninglessness of meaning obliges us to speak without hope of sense or conclusion. As Beckett (1958: 291) illustrates ("the fact would seem to be, if in my situation one may speak of facts, not only that I shall have to speak of things of which I cannot speak, but also, which is even more interesting, but also that I, which is if possible even more interesting, that I shall have to, I forget, no matter") even as a rambling, stunted outpouring, meaning remains and speaks through us, "...I am obliged to speak. I shall never be silent. Never" (291).<sup>9</sup>

7

Samuel Beckett; Gilles Deleuze; Simon Critchley; positions (the exhausted); voice (the meaningless voice that prevents you from being nothing and nowhere); anxiety



It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were sitting around a campfire. One of the men said, "Tell us a story, Jack." And Jack said, "It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were sitting around a campfire. One of the men said, 'tell us a story Jack.' And Jack said,



Bruce Nauman, *Clown torture: Dark and stormy night with laughter* (Detail), 1987. Video and installation. (Higgin 2005: 12)

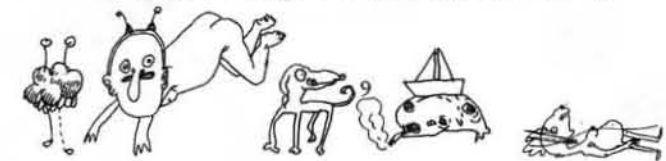
'It was a dark and stormy night, three men were sitting around a campfire. One of the men said, "Tell us a story, Jack." And Jack said, "It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were sitting around a campfire. One of the men said, "Tell us a story, Jack." And Jack said, "It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were sitting around a campfire.....

Bruce Nauman; elucubration

Returning to the somewhat superficial dichotomy outlined above between the meaningful and the meaningless, meaningfulness is opposed to the meaningful in that it produces incessantly *without end*. In relation to meaning, however, both of the processes ('ful' and 'less') are inter-reliant and similar in their ultimate failure. While the meaningful attempts to allocate contingent fragments of meaning into an apparently seamless narrative, the meaningless sabotages this process of assimilation. Those stories that are told and retold (when I was a boy...), memories that appear to solidify the truth of our existence (...I was there), unravel eventually into absurdity.<sup>10</sup>

This framing of the meaningless, as something that does not effectively quell the desire for meaning, only weakening and stunting its prospects, presents a practical alternative to meaningfulness as something that is *always* frivolous and enjoyable. As mentioned above, the idea of designating meaningfulness as a free or silly space is extremely tempting, and even more so in relation to the formulation of an artistic practice. Seen in this way, as an acknowledgement, meaningfulness appears to provide a sort of blanket amnesty that shields the more pleasurable, self-indulgent and pleasant aspects of production from those apparently insincere and overwhelmingly pretentious attempts to present that which is produced and the process behind it as something achingly meaningful, eternally serious, and very, very difficult.

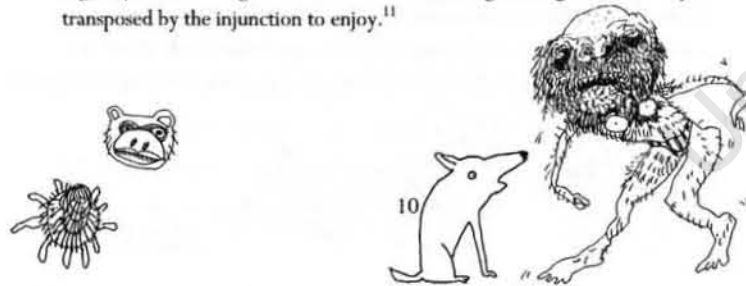
Admittedly, art is somewhat non-functional – complicated, but hardly complex. As with everything, art occupies a place within the self-referential system of meaning, it signifies and is sustained by our belief in it – as an endeavour, however, a practice that demands legitimization in order to be viewed as meaningful, art's 'self-certification' (Davidson quoted in Žižek 2004: 5) is somewhat incapacitated. Posing art as uniquely opportune in this regard would be



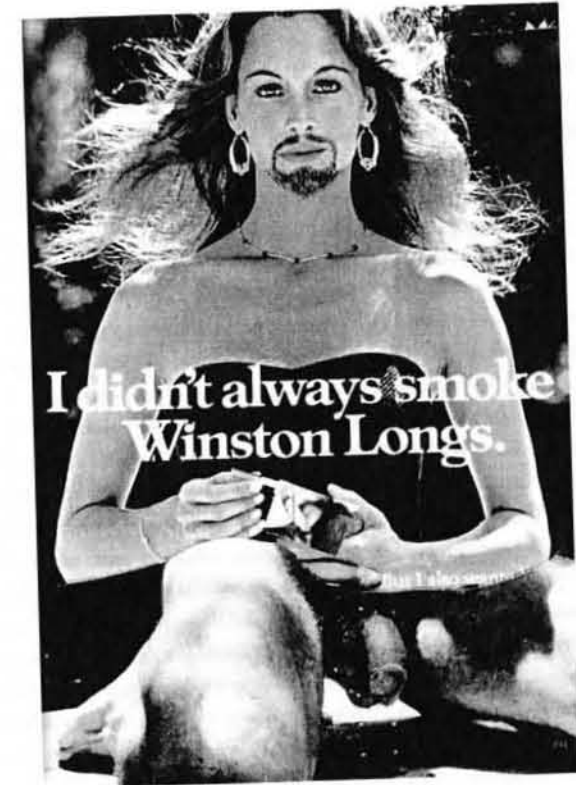
somewhat infelicitous, though it would be quite easy to do so, as the American critic Dave Hickey (1996) does in his essay *Frivolity and unction*. Reacting to the defensive furore caused by an episode of the TV show *60 minutes* that presented an

unflattering portrait of the 'art world' as both 'fatuous' and 'pretentious', Hickey (1996: 118-119) proposes an alternative response: openly admitting that the 'art world/community/market' is fatuous and pretentious, and that art is a "bad, frivolous and silly thing to do". Recognizing the desperate attempts of his contemporaries to reconstitute the 'intrinsic' virtue and seriousness of artistic endeavour as well as the 'essential goodness' of art itself, Hickey (119) invites his readers to relinquish this "political fiction that we employ to solicit taxpayers' money" and consider, "for a moment...the lightness we would feel if this burden of hypocrisy were lifted from our shoulders – the sheer joy of it".

For all its rhetorical charms, the problem with Hickey's proposition is not only that it singles art out as something *especially* frivolous (as opposed to engineering or rocket science?) but also that it fails to recognize that the fictions we employ have less to do with tax payers than with ourselves. Deciding to support or produce art that is "courageously silly and frivolous" (123) may seem rather easy, but how long would it take to realise that the work just isn't that funny and that our silliness is unconvincing and feeble? By replacing the comfortable legitimization of virtuous conviction and seriousness with silliness and frivolity, Hickey immediately fills up the space left by meaninglessness with something that is arguably as nauseating as what was removed. The guise of grave solemnity is transposed by the injunction to enjoy.<sup>11</sup>



Dave Hickey; positions (fool)



Paul McCarthy, *Winston Longs*, 1976. Pen and collage on magazine page. (McCarthy 2006: 241)

Paul McCarthy; body (genitals)

## ENJOY!

The question of how enjoyment factors into the idea of the meaningful has an interesting contribution to make here. Inherent in Hickey's assumption that nothing would change even if it was 'admitted' that art is bad, silly and frivolous, is the suggestion that everyone who hasn't already, or doesn't admit it, is lying (either we admit that we are bad, silly and frivolous, or we lie). Why should solemnity be associated immediately with hypocrisy? And why should seriousness be replaced with silliness? As if a deluge of glee is furtively restrained behind every unsmiling face, everyone who is not Enjoying!

This compulsion towards frivolity effectively acts as an attempt to prevent a confrontation with meaninglessness. Increasingly pervasive, though difficult to define here as a symptom of consumerism, capitalism, liberal democracy, postmodernism (or a symptom at all), the obsessive dressing up of meaninglessness with fun and good times is simply another way of making it all seem worthwhile. As Žižek (1999: sp) explains, within a symbolic economy that presents itself and is understood as permissive, pleasure becomes duty, "subjects experience the need to 'have a good time', to enjoy themselves, as a kind of duty, and consequently, feel guilty for failing to be happy".<sup>12</sup> Happiness and uninhibited (though not excessive) enjoyment becomes the customary feature or objective of a meaningful life. Tying in with the introductory discussion above on the psychic space afforded by the meaningful as comparable to the ideal totalitarian universe, Žižek (sp) notes further that the 'permissive' social economy is similar in effect to a totalitarian system. Whilst the totalitarian command is to do your duty *and* enjoy it ("it is not enough for people to follow their leader, they must love him") in a permissive economy, pleasure becomes a duty, "the command to enjoy doing your duty coincides with the duty to enjoy yourself".<sup>13</sup> Surfacing within an approach that Žižek (sp) describes as a kind of "universalized reflexivity", the duty to enjoy becomes literalized through the revered and almost obligatory directives of self-realization and self-fulfilment.<sup>14</sup>

The lack of restrictions (you choose your government, your sexual preference, your idols, your memories, your future) provides a semblance of infinite possibility, nothing is beyond your control and, as a result, *you* are responsible for everything.<sup>15</sup> The immediate problem with this kind of logic is not only that it equates choice to freedom (a choice between A or B does not offer freedom but A or B)(Coetzee 2007: 8), but also that assumes that we know what we really desire.<sup>16</sup> Far from hedonistic, this compulsive narration transforms self-interest (leading a meaningful life) into an ethical imperative – what appears as initially as permissive, transparent and adjustable is actually "saturated with rules and regulations *intended to serve our well-being...*" (Žižek 1999: sp)(my emphasis). Like the benevolent father (see note 11), the apparent freedoms that are on offer are supplemented by the surreptitious demand to make the right choice, *because it's good for you*. If you're not happy, take antidepressants, if you want some salami but don't want to gain weight, buy fat-free salami, if you want to smoke, do it outside! What remains unadvertised about this bombardment of "positive lifestyle choices" (Flora 2008: 16) is that if you *don't* achieve profound self-realisation you will have only yourself to blame. Explicit in the proposition that you can "live life to the fullest" if only you adapt your "state of mind" (Life with Rowena KhayaFM 2008: 13) is that it is actually *possible* to live life to the fullest, but what could this possibly mean?



I DON'T WANT TO ROCK!  
(Williams 2000: sp)



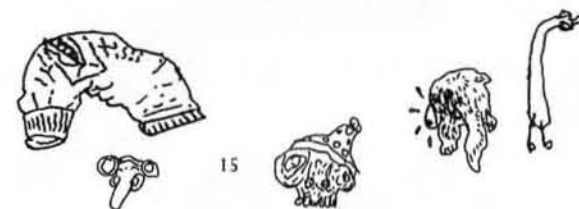
Chris Cunn, Still from *Rock DJ*, 2000. Photograph. (Williams 2000: sp)

14

*body (flesh); voice (the voice that skins the body); rotten nature*

354

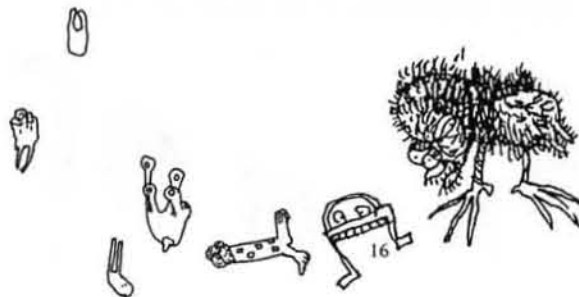
In the context of meaning, enjoyment as a self-serving duty marks the appearance of the meaningful and is as such, an undisputed achievement. Anticipating the anxiety, resentment and guilt that is inevitably imposed when such aspirations do not materialize, the option to redefine their function in the trajectory of your total 'life experience' appears as a blessed deferral of meaninglessness. Driven by its inherent aversion to that which threatens to expose its lack (the meaninglessness of meaning) the desire for the meaningful is both insatiable and unrelenting. The upshot of this is a well lubricated economy of consumable meaning that arrives pre-packaged in its affirmative form, a market that *demands* meaningful meaning. I cannot even brush my teeth in the morning without being persuaded that my toothpaste is providing me with the ultimate tooth brushing experience, an epic battle between the "sources of bad breath" and "thousands of germ-fighting bubbles" plays out inside my mouth while I wait for that "long-lasting" feeling of "icy cool" (GlaxoSmithKline 2008: sp). Though somewhat exaggerated by advertising references (consumerism only makes explicit a supply of demand that already exists within the structure of our desire), the seductive promise of the meaningful compels the transmutation of even the most routinely banal and trivial aspects of life into life-affirming experiences. Contingent, arbitrary and disparate processes, thoughts, impulses and occurrences are commodified, totalized and swallowed up by ready-to-wear narratives.



15

355

To a large extent the enforced encounter with meaninglessness that I am attempting to construct is an attempt to pervert this anticipated demand for neatly packaged, meaningful meaning. Within the production of art, owing to the seemingly altruistic clause of exhibition, this *expected* demand seems fairly guaranteed.<sup>17</sup> It would be dubious, of course, to assume that viewers actually expect to receive an exhibition or an artwork in a nutshell, its meaningfulness spelt out in bold vinyl lettering. It is somewhat more realistic, however, to assume that the production of art coincides with the fantasmatic construction of a viewer and their expected response. As such it is not so much the viewer (or reader in this case) from which I anticipate the demand for meaningful meaning but the viewer/reader that I am in fact writing this for (I wouldn't be writing it like this for myself), my production is sustained by my belief in this simultaneously demonized and idealized recipient. Domesticated, to an extent by superficial opinions about the present climate of exhibition, trends within the existing gallery system, art criticism or even Michaelis itself, there is nonetheless something inordinately intimidating about this projected recipient.



a deer exists a unicorn exists; anxiety

"it's an enormously complicated thing  
to be an artist, have a studio and exist  
in the world, so complicated..."  
George (Obrist 2003: 259)



Cezary Bodzianowski, *Rainbow*, 1995. Photograph. (Verwoert 2007: 243)

Cezary Bodzianowski; slapstick; rainbow; positions (hero); if things were simple word  
would have gotten around



## This is art

The appeal of accepting the meaninglessness of my practice and allowing it to remain unadorned, while functioning as a reaction against the commodification of meaning into the conveniently meaningful, is also, therefore, an attempt to draw up and dig out an escape route. Though I'm sure it won't be necessary, the escape would not only be from my demon viewer who meets my desperate "what do you want from me?" with a silent admonishment and compels me to explain over and over again, but also, I think, from art itself.<sup>18</sup>

In an attempt to pacify or reason with the chimera on my back, and as an explanation of why escape is an appealing but nonetheless implausible daydream, the questionable status of art as a signifier presents itself here as an opportune detour. As Vito Acconci (2003: 57) observes in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, "the problem with art is that it's only a field whose name not only categorizes it but also gives it value: when we say something is "art", we're praising it...so art praises itself as it names itself; it comes pre-approved". Significant in its emphasis on the performative effect of the signifier 'art', Acconci's statement does however need to be tempered slightly in its assumption that the categorization 'art' is immediately accompanied by value.<sup>19</sup> My feeling at present is that art as a signifier operates similarly to that of an empty gesture; while everyone knows that the offer of art is essentially fraudulent, that it doesn't really achieve what it purports to achieve (effect a guaranteed designation of value, or warrant praise) we nonetheless act as though we believe in its value, actualizing and sustaining our belief by acting further in accordance with its designations.<sup>20</sup> Like children who pretend that they believe in Santa Claus so that their parents can continue to believe that their children believe (Žižek 2004: 29), we are the subjects that are "supposed to believe". It would initially seem that exposing art as a fraud would elicit some sort of social catastrophe, and yet it has been exposed and re-exposed, without consequence.

18

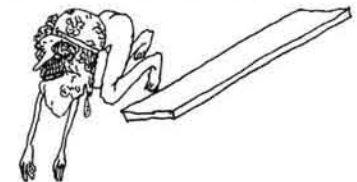
Vito Acconci

Rather than causing outrage, specific works of art that initially seem to threaten the apparently value laden edifice on which all art rests, are simply assimilated into the category of art and serve only to strengthen it and broaden its reach.<sup>21</sup> As a signifier, art resists any form of sabotage – the real empty gesture of art is therefore the offer presented by 'not art'. As an opposite, which depends on an amount of structural similarity to be opposite at all (house is not the opposite of dog) the apparently converse signifier 'not art' ultimately chooses art – once the point of declaring 'not art' has been reached, the attempt at keeping the thing outside has already failed. The result of this remarkable dexterity, one which is able to assimilate even its opposite, is that although the performative effect of 'art' seems rather robust and is extremely difficult to get rid of, it is also, in the way that an empty gesture is empty, an empty signifier. A convincing point on this subject is provided by Barend de Wet, quoted in an article on his *Rooms* (1999) hotel by Chris Roper (1999: 1) who recounts that his "first question to De Wet is a bullish one: how can he possibly call a hotel an artwork? Awkwardly, his answer is that he wouldn't bother". He then quotes de Wet saying,

"I was going to make it an artwork, but I have a new theory, that I don't even think art exists. Everything is art, so why call anything art? ... I'm now in the odd position of having to justify why I would call *Rooms* art, which is a neat little trick to play on a critic. It's a case of 'This is not an artwork', rather than 'This is a hotel.'"

If the designation 'art' needs nothing other than itself in order to apply its performative designation, and does nothing other than effect its designation, what indeed, as de Wet suggests, is the point of its application in the first place? There is a chance, I think, that art is simply a big misunderstanding. One of the more significant offshoots of this performative impotency is that instead of provoking further discussion or conversation, the designation of art is often a discursive dead end.

19



Barend de Wet

## THIS IS ART

Jeremy Purén, *This is art / this is not art*, 2007. Stamp. Detail from an interactive installation where stamps declaring 'this is art' and subsequently, 'this is not art' were made available to the audience). University of Stellenbosch.

20

Jeremy Purén

360

Even the strangest, most ridiculously absurd, perplexing or arbitrary occurrences and objects cease to be strange (or even interesting) when they are recognized and explained away as art. Acconci (2003: 51) provides another appropriate point here in his observation that "an art context is a context of observers. In every other field of life, when you come upon something for the first time...you pick it up, you touch it, you possibly smell it, you taste it. But in art, the tradition is that you stand aside and look".<sup>22</sup> In its emphasis on the opportunity provided by the public space, or rather, by a space that exceeds art's performative reach simply by having nothing to do with it, Acconci's comment raises the probability of producing work that is able to side step the designation of art *and* 'not art' as well as the meaningless but nonetheless finalizing explanation that accompanies it.

21

dead ends

361

If there is one thing we can do effectively  
in the "real world," it's turn shit into gold  
(Fraser 2006:124)



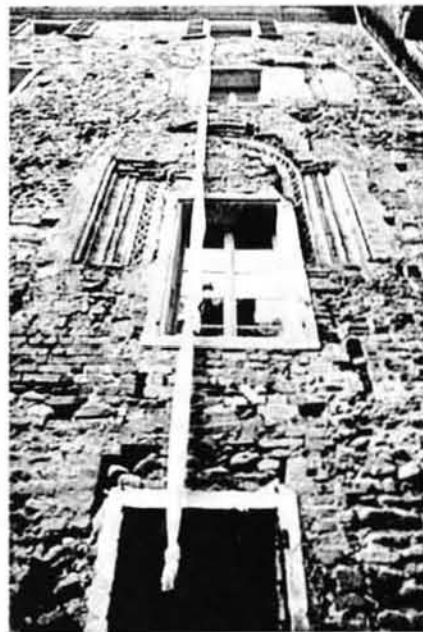
Wim Delvoye, *Cloaca Faeces* (Antwerp) 19.12.2000.  
Vacuum packed Cloaca faeces, plexi (Delvoye 2008: sp)

## There's nothing to see here

The public space, as a synecdoche for a space that represents the almost conceivable gap between the expected expectations, the laws of attraction and the pressures of the big Other is also, therefore, an unsustainable space.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless it is under the above title, and within this space that I intend to try and produce a body of work, a space that is inextricably tied up within art but that is not condemned to the "the death rattle of feeling" or "the sound of a mind slamming shut" (Morton 2005: 208). Still swamped, evidently, by the pretenses of the meaningful, but also where, as Cattelan (2005: 79) amiably states, it is possible to "be a little stupid, and people will say, 'Oh you are so stupid; thank you, thank you for being so stupid'".

Whether a habitual acknowledgement and exposition of the meaninglessness of meaning (which is more plausibly an inevitable encounter rather than a voluntary enforcement) and, as a result, the meaningless of my production, is possible without becoming immediately enamoured with the temptingly meaningful conclusions that spread themselves out before me, or, at worst, without meaningless itself becoming exploited as some sort of perverted success, is open to debate. I just don't believe I have a choice. Since meaninglessness does not designate a void of meaning but rather a lack of conviction, or disbelief, in the meaningfulness of meaning, and since the gesture of both 'art' and 'not art' is empty, escape is not really an option. Even Cattelan, as Tom Morton (1996: 206) points out, leaves his concession (a knotted ladder of bed-sheets) behind after running away from his exhibition at the Castello di Rivara, Italy.

So forgive me if I relapse...into my dream of an  
 art unresentful of ~~its~~ its insuperable indigence and  
 to proud for the farce of giving an receiving  
 (Beckett 1965: 112)



Maurizio Cattelan, *Una domenica a riviera*, 1992. (Marian Goodman Gallery 2003: sp)

So while I join Beckett (1965: 112) in his "dream of an art unresentful of its insuperable indigence and too proud for the farce of giving and receiving" (there is something inherently untrustworthy about altruism) I also join him in his assertion that "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" (1965: 103). In answering the inevitable question of *why* we are obliged to express, I would have to employ Beckett (1965: 119) again in answering that "I don't know". Adding, of course, that every day, just as we confront the meaninglessness of meaning, there are things so desperately inconsequential and yet so saturated with the interminable plodding of life that they are able to simultaneously dispute and verify the validity of our existence, compelling us to reconstitute that which we had only just renounced. Snatching us into an "irreducible reflexivity" (Žižek 2006a: 12) of meaning and sending us scurrying incessantly, towards and away from "the abyss of its circularity" (Žižek 2004: 5).

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#### APPENDIX A: Excerpt from Samuel Beckett's *Watt* (1985: 82-83).

...the pot remained a pot, Watt felt sure of that, for everyone but Watt. For Watt alone it was not a pot, any more. Then, when he turned for reassurance to himself, who was not Mr. Knott's, in the sense that the pot was, who had come from without and whom the without would take again, he made the distressing discovery that of himself too he could no longer affirm anything that did not seem as false as if he had affirmed it of a stone. Not that Watt was in the habit of affirming things of himself, for he was not, but he found it a help, from time to time, to be able to say, with some appearance of reason, Watt is a man, all the same, Watt is a man, or, Watt is in the street, with thousands of fellow creatures within call. And Watt was greatly troubled by this tiny little thing, more troubled perhaps than he had ever been by anything, and Watt had been frequently and exceedingly troubled, in his time, by this imperceptible, no, hardly imperceptible, since he perceived it, by this indefinable thing that prevented him from saying, with conviction, and to his relief, of the object that was so like a pot, that it was a pot, and of the creature that still in spite of everything presented a large number of exclusively human characteristic, that it was a man. And Watt's need of semantic succour was at times so great that he would set to trying names on things, and on himself, almost as a woman hats. Thus of the pseudo-pot he would say, after reflexion, It is a shield, or, growing bolder, It is a raven, and so on. But the pot proved as little a shield, or a raven, or any other of the things that Watt called it, as a pot. As for himself, though he could no longer call it a man, as he had used to do, with the intuition that he was perhaps not talking nonsense, yet he could not imagine what else to call it, if not a man. But Watt's imagination had never been a lively one. So he continued to think of himself as a man, as his mother had taught him, when she said, There's a good little man, there's a bonny little man, or, There's a clever little man. But for all the relief that this afforded him he might just as well have thought of himself as a box, or an urn.

*pot-pot; language (blanks for when words gone)*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Which, as Fraser (2002: 213) adds, “seems a thin cover on growth for growth’s sake”.

<sup>2</sup> The idea of an outcome or product as the expected end to research is discussed by Ian Biggs in his essay, ‘Art as research, doctoral education, and the politics of knowledge’, 2006. Though Biggs’ essay deals specifically with the question of doctoral study in art and the shift of the role of ‘artist/pedagogue’ to ‘artist/pedagogue/researcher’ the issues that he discusses around the validity of art as research seem similarly appropriate here. Particularly the idea of “art as exposition” as a practice that is “at odds with that produced for the commercial or state-subsidized art worlds” (Biggs 2006: 7). It is difficult to discern, however, whether Biggs intends ‘exposition’ as an ‘elucidation’ or as an ‘exhibition’. Another interesting issue that Biggs raises is that of the various discrepancies between the standing of art inside and outside the university and of the “suspicion of the art world, to which many full-time artists/pedagogues still look for confirmation of their ‘real’ status” (2006: 8). Again, this issue is not isolated to artist/pedagogues or doctoral study, it reverberates within the pejorative designation of a masters in fine art as a procrastination of the ‘real’ art world (which, as an art ‘world’, is still apparently a world apart, making real world citizenship even trickier for academics).

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here that the idea of a self-referential, circular system of meaning relies on an identification with Lacan’s idea of the Symbolic as well as an understanding of Derrida’s assertion that there is nothing outside of the text. While the self-referentiality of language is rather obvious (given the arbitrary nature of the signifier) the idea of the Symbolic confuses things a bit through an emphasis on the role of fantasy and belief. As Žižek (2004: 4) explains, the Symbolic order comprises the “‘substance’ of our social existence, the interpersonal set of rules that coordinate our existence” where the fantasies or

beliefs that we employ and subscribe to are legitimated only by other fantasies and beliefs. In this way, the Symbolic, also referred to as the ‘big Other’, is “properly virtual” in that “its status is that of a subjective presupposition...it exists only in so far as subjects *act as if it exists*” (Žižek 2006a: 10). Žižek (2004: 5) adds that “far from functioning as the ‘fatal flaw’ of the symbolic order, this circularity is the very condition of its effective functioning”. An important aspect of the Symbolic is its opposition to the Real which exists beyond the circular system of the Symbolic. In this context, the Real is best explained as the impossible, that which is devoid of meaning; a void that annihilates the meaning of meaning and which threatens to unravel and obliterate the fantasies and beliefs that sustain our fantasies and beliefs (our Symbolic existence).

<sup>4</sup> The term *imago* is used by Lacan (2006: 76-79) within his theory of the mirror stage to describe the image that the mirror reflects back to the infant, an image of the self *as an image*. The *imago* is therefore an image of the self as an Other, an “ideal unity on which to hang the self” (Ching-Liang Low 1996: 193).

<sup>5</sup> Spanish chickpeas

<sup>6</sup> This process of trying out or trying on meanings, but never finding a perfectly convincing fit is well illustrated by Beckett’s (1970 : 81-83) character Watt in his attempt to call one his employers (Mr.Knott) pots a pot. In what is perhaps the best explanation of the arbitrary nature of the sign, as well as the anxiety that the lack, once identified, of meaning in meaning invokes, Watt’s performative “pot” is repeated in vain, the ‘pot’ cannot be named with conviction. (see Appendix A for an excerpt of the text).

<sup>7</sup> Though arguing for an approach to the meaninglessness of meaning that resists “salvific” narratives (Critchley 2004: 212) *Very little...almost nothing* is, regrettably, redeemed in the end. Having begun as an attempt to get around the problem of religious disappointment, the meaninglessness that Critchley refers to is

essentially the void left behind after faith in God had been lost. In another way, as explained in the retrospective preface, the book is an attempt to confront and deal with his father's death and is a successful attempt to reconstitute a fantasy that is able to evade the meaninglessness of death. As Critchley (xx) asserts, "the difficulty consists in thinking through the meaninglessness of meaning without bewitching ourselves with new and exotic forms of existential balm". Yet as the final chapter (*Know happiness: on Beckett*) unfolds, Critchley succumbs and develops a lyrically moving, if not nauseating, exegesis of Beckett's "achievement of the ordinary" (212).

After identifying an "injunction that resounds through Beckett's texts: *Imagine!*" Critchley (212) goes on to suggest that we are "cursed by the need for narrative, by the resorts of fable, flayed alive by memory...hence we must attempt to people the void, to presume to be saved". He then borrows from an earlier quotation of Beckett's *Malone dies*, ("live and invent. I have tried. Invent. It is not the word. Neither is live. No matter. I have tried") (Beckett 1958: 194; Critchley 2004: 193) and writes that "because we cannot sit quietly in a room, because we have to live and invent, knowing that invention is the wrong word, as indeed is life. We go on. This is very little...almost nothing. But perhaps that's just human. 'You're on earth, there's no cure for that'. Imagine. After all, a lobster couldn't do it". Thus the abject image of a person wheeling about "as if with one foot nailed to the floor" (2004: 196) is replaced with images of old ladies tripping on the stairs or a man found dead with his hands in his pants. That which is so desperately *ordinary*, so stupidly and irredeemably meaningless, is reconstituted as something comfortingly 'human'. Failure is made beautiful and we are reassured that we are, at least, better than lobsters! Unsurprisingly, Žižek (2004: 1) provides an irresistibly appropriate counter-quote, taken from Brecht, who writes that "there is nothing more ethically repulsive than the idea that, beneath the surface of differences, we all share the same kernel of humanity, of human weaknesses, hopes and pleasures".

<sup>8</sup> "As the artist no longer had anything to say, he began to talk" (Obrist 2003: 15)(n8).

<sup>9</sup> Read in conjunction with another line from the *Unnamable* "this voice, if only this voice could stop, this meaningless voice which prevents you from being nothing and nowhere" (Beckett 1958: 370) this inability to be silent contains an interesting link to Žižek's (1994: 113-136) description of the "voice that skins the body", analogous to the noise of David Lynch's films, that low, unrelenting hum, that keeps us anxiously alive.

<sup>10</sup> See appendix B, pg 30

<sup>11</sup> 'The injunction to enjoy' is discussed extensively by Žižek (1994, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006b)(etc.) as a command issued by the superego. As Žižek (1999: sp) describes in a useful analogy, the superego is like a benevolent father who "says to his child 'Although you know how much grandma would like to see you, you should go to her party only if you really want to – if you don't, you should stay at home'" as opposed to the Symbolic law, who as a father would say to the child, "You must go to grandma's birthday party and behave nicely, even if you are bored to death – I don't care whether you want to, just do it!". Operating in a different way to achieve the same effect (the child going to grandmothers party), the superego figure adds the additional clause of enjoyment, "the trick performed by the superego is to seem to offer the child a free choice, when, as every child knows, he is not being given any choice at all. Worse than that, he is being given an order and told to smile at the same time. Not only: 'You must visit your grandma, whatever you feel,' but: 'You must visit your grandma, and you must be glad to do it!' The superego orders you to enjoy doing what you have to do".

<sup>12</sup> A permissive economy is understood here as a system that encourages cultural and religious tolerance, lacks strictly enforced rules that would impede individual desires, basic human rights or the freedom of speech, choice etc.

<sup>13</sup> Žižek (1999: sp) explains further that “the superego controls the zone in which these two opposites [duty as pleasure, pleasure as duty] overlap” (see note 11).

<sup>14</sup> This ‘universalized reflexivity’ is exemplified for Žižek (2004: 1-2) by the “vulgarised version of narrativist-deconstructionist psychoanalysis” of John Gray (author of *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus*) who proposes that “the solution to a psychic deadlock resides in a creative ‘positive’ rewriting of the narrative of our past”. Suggested as a ‘cure’ for ‘primordial traumatic encounters’ this method provides a semblance of domestication without actually confronting “the Real of a traumatic encounter whose structuring role in the subject’s psychic economy forever resists its symbolic rewriting” (as outlined in note 3 the Real is that which cannot be narrativized, or absorbed into the Symbolic). Going on to imagine a rewriting of the Decalogue on Mount Sinai (“adultery – fine, provided it is sincere and serves the goal of profound self-realisation...”) Žižek (2) maintains that what is lost in this reflective and reflexive, self-oriented narrativizing, is not “hard fact” or the truth of the event as it happened, but the “Real of a traumatic encounter whose organising role in the subject’s psychic economy resists its symbolic rewriting”.

<sup>15</sup> It must also be mentioned here that this reflective process is able to operate as effectively in achieving an almost opposite effect, where an individual is able to narrate an account of their life that absolves them of any responsibility for their current situation or actions. Žižek (1999: sp) provides a perfect example in his description of a neo-Nazi skinhead who, when “pressed to give reasons for his behavior, start[s] to talk just like a social worker, citing diminished social mobility, rising insecurity, the disintegration of paternal authority, the lack of maternal love in his early childhood”.

<sup>16</sup> Following Lacan, Žižek (2006a: 36) asserts that “desire is the other’s desire”. Including the big Other (the Symbolic) as well as the Other as my neighbour (both

gentrified and monstrously inhuman, see Žižek 2004), not only is my desire “desire for the other” it is also a desire “to be desired by the other, and especially, desire for what the other desires” (Žižek 2004: 2). Our desire is then frustrated further as the “Other’s desire is “an enigma not only for us, but also for the Other itself” (Žižek 2004: 2).

<sup>17</sup> Possibly as a result of this anticipated demand, though it is not always the case, there is often (within an exhibition space or surrounding a particular artist or body of work) a sense of over-explanation – from catalogue essays to press releases, curatorial and artists statements, price lists and even the artists name itself – it is as if the works themselves, these “reticent objects”, as Claire Robins (2007: 23) suggests, are “coaxed into loquaciousness” by additional information. While the proliferation of these supplementary sources is not necessarily a negative attribute (if anything, it should be more proliferate) the problem is that it is sustained as a supplementary economy. Rather than functioning as additional sources that offer up something of their own, these supplements are presented and received as that which will assist in the consumption of the work itself, packaging and commodifying it into something conveniently meaningful. Though it often seems to be a matter of financial viability and sustainability, an exercise in marketing, this process of commodification cannot be reduced to something that is strictly about money. As touched on earlier and as emphasized by Andrea Fraser (2006: 124), “the fundamental basis for the entire economy of art is belief”. In a more complicated way then, the proliferation of additional sources has more to do with an attempt, I believe, to sustain the art-object (be it the artist themselves, a body of work, an actual object etc) as a fetish and to fetishize art itself. On these terms, and in line with the discussion earlier on the inability to be silent, there is an interesting opportunity presented by both the demand and the supply of additional sources, to centralize these supplements and recoup their capability to extend, alter and complicate that which they purport to describe.

<sup>18</sup> The personification of the anxiety that I associate with artistic practice (though it is not at all limited to it and extends far beyond concerns of production) is linked to the image of the 'big Other' (the Symbolic order) as well as that which it obfuscates and fails to contain. The fantasy of this ideal/demon viewer, which is both monstrous and miserably small, simultaneously sustains (by sustaining my belief in its monstrous existence and compelling me to answer it) and threatens to obliterate (by exposing its lack of self-certification and therefore that which it purports to conceal) my ability to produce. Following on from the idea of desire as the desire of the Other (see note 16), Žižek (2004: 2) asserts that "the Lacanian 'che vuoi?'" directed towards the Other "is not simply an inquiry into 'What do you want?', but more an inquiry into 'What's bugging you, what is it in you that makes you so unbearable not only for us, but also for yourself, that you yourself obviously do not master?'". The trick is, of course, that this fantasy of the Other, of the viewer, of the enigma of our desire, does not conceal anything, the fantasy itself is as real as it gets.

<sup>19</sup> Referring to that which the signifier performs or elicits, the term 'performative' is used here in reference to the elaborated and extended version of J.L. Austin's (1962) conception of the speech act, as discussed by Derrida (1988) in *Signature Event Context*.

<sup>20</sup> An empty gesture, as Žižek (2004: 12) explains in an example of two friends who are competing for a promotion, is an offer that appears to provide its recipient with a choice of options of which only one, the right choice, can actually or should be chosen (it depends on a preconceived response). In Žižek's example, one of the friends gets the promotion and, in a chivalrous spirit, offers the position to the other. The losing friend knows that the gesture is empty and declines, 'I couldn't possibly accept', adding 'you deserve it' and 'I'm happy for you'. Civility reigns and their friendship is sustained. If, in a situation like this, an empty gesture is accepted, "it causes the disintegration of the semblance (of freedom) that pertains to social order, which equals the disintegration of the social

substance itself, the dissolution of the social link" (Žižek 2004: 12). Needless to say, if the choice presented to the losing friend was actually taken seriously as a choice, the guise under which the friends remained friends would be lost.

<sup>21</sup> In his essay on Maurizio Cattelan (cited earlier in reference to 'institutionalized prisoners') Tom Morton (2005: 209) observes how, after setting out to "blow a powerful idea away...you end up (because power is a spongy, absorbent thing) providing it with an alibi". Immediately countering this with a quote from Cattelan saying, "but that's okay, I guess that's part of the game...wasn't the dream of the avant garde to become completely mainstream?" (Morton 2005: 209).

<sup>22</sup> Acconci goes on to associate this reluctance to move past the position of observer to economics and an unspoken intimidation or purposeful frustration on part of the institution or exhibition space. Again, Acconci's statement needs to be slightly tempered here. Rather than crediting this distancing effect as something to the institutionalized structure of exhibition it would be better, I think, to blame this reluctance on a lack of interest. In 'all other fields of life', which, in the context of Acconci's overall discussion should probably read, 'in public spaces', the move beyond observation is driven by the knowledge that this thing which *you* have discovered, is now yours to keep or at least yours to claim. I think that the lack of discovery within sanctioned spaces of exhibition, the feeling that this is something that someone else discovered first, has a larger role in creating a 'context of observers' than intimidating structures designed to sustain the value-system of art. In his book on 'new forms of commitment in art' Rutger Pontzen (2000: 16) echoes Acconci in describing widely practiced 'viewing habits' within exhibition spaces, where things are expected to be looked at from an 'appropriate distance'. As a counter to this, Pontzen (2000: 11) describes the projects orchestrated by a previous director of the Ghent museum of modern art, Jan Hoet. Motivated initially by inadequate facilities to house the museum collection, Hoet distributed works to homes in the surrounding area. Viewers of the resulting



exhibition *Chambres d'Amis*, 1986, had to ring the doorbells of the listed homes and ask the owners to see the works. There are obviously other trends within exhibition practices (interventions, interactive artworks and installations) that also serve to counter the perception of art as something to be observed from a distance.

<sup>23</sup> Even literally, the public space is optimistically imagined – beaches, parks and streets owned by municipalities, sand dunes owned by Cape Nature, and “plazas that are owned by corporations” (Acconci 2003: 52) – and does more to expose the boundaries of private property. Seemingly unregulated only until an unspoken rule is broken, the public space is only that which you “are *allowed* – almost like children – to use...a kind of kindergarten place to play” (Acconci 2003: 53) (my emphasis).

**explanation; art as a question; the question of we; writing as embarrassing; pornographic tendency; psycho-analysis (as a suggestion); kitsch; positions (cool and ironic); circular performance; artists vs. real people; public performance**

(Below) excerpts from notes for the presentation of *Master of Nothing* (shown on preceding pages).

dead serious & not serious at all – trying to exist with a contradiction (anxiety?)

**IF the question of WE comes up:** Writing is a performance; If adhered to, the suggestion to remove the use of ‘we’ as an interpellation of the reader, or ‘our’, ‘us’ etc. would effectively cause the performance of the writing to fail miserably – that is ultimately what it is, this rhetoric, a performance that garners a response. Your rejection of it means (hopefully) that you have noticed this use of ‘we’ and then gone through what I have said in order to decide that you are definitely not part of this ‘we’ that I am speaking about, that’s your responsibility as the reader and my prerogative as the writer. I don’t think it’s fair to expect me to undermine or condescend my demon reader.

#### **NOTE 22 (over explanation, giving and receiving)**

This process of fetishisation is also very simply the commodification of art and artists within the context of near-sighted gallery based practices and the desperation spurred on by a misassumption when it comes to writing funding applications.

#### **DISCUSSION OF ART NOT ART > ART AS EMPTY SIGNIFIER**

It must be added that all signifiers are empty, as much as ‘art’ does nothing more than designate art, ‘horse’ does nothing more than designate ‘horse’.

**Escape:** One of the ways to explain this desire for escape is in the form of a confession, and again, even though it’s no secret, I feel as if I may be giving away too much. It is highly likely that the pressure of producing something worthy of exhibition has become distended within my own practice by a sincere lack of conviction that what I am able to conceive or produce could actually effect a legitimate transaction. In other words, I struggle to believe in the strength of my artistic currency. Conceptually retarded and aesthetically ailing, the work I produce is not funny or playful, or serious, or emotively effective, it has no real charisma, it is not clever or “cool-and-ironic” (Smith 2007: 12), or amicably stupid, or cunning, or subversive. It’s just no good.

#### **ART NOT ART WHO CARES!!!!???**

#### **ART AS A CONVERSATIONAL DEAD END. “IT’S ART”**

**IMPORTANT:** leaning towards public art is not about interacting with ‘real’ people but about working in a space where the signifier art doesn’t come into play – where information can stay meaningless in a sense (is this possible?) (Pamphlet series).

our wretchedness is not our greatness; Simon Critchley; Alain Badiou; pricks; architecture (empire); direction; Emmanuel Levinas; people; Ludwig Wittgenstein; Samuel Beckett; Dave Hickey; absurdity; Franz Kafka; productive confusion; anxiety; laughter; proximity; positions (neighbour); Emmanuel Levinas

(Below) retrieved excerpts and notes to self from scrapped sections of *Master of Nothing*.

"since it is sure of its ability to control the entire domain of the visible and the audible via the laws governing commercial circulation and democratic communication, Empire no longer censures anything. All art, and all thought, is ruined when we accept this permission to consume, to communicate and to enjoy. We should become pitiless censors of ourselves"

(Alan Badiou, Fifteen theses on contemporary art, quoted in Žižek 2004: 1).

"What for a prick is fucking you? Koji kurac te jebe?..."

Enjoyment as disgusting "two people are laughing together, say at a joke. One of them has used certain somewhat unusual words and now they both break out into a sort of bleating" (Wittgenstein in Critchley, 2002: 35).

IMPORTANT!

NOT SENTIMENTALIZING THE MEANINGLESS (OUR WRETCHEDNESS IS OUR GREATNESS – bad CRITCHLEY).

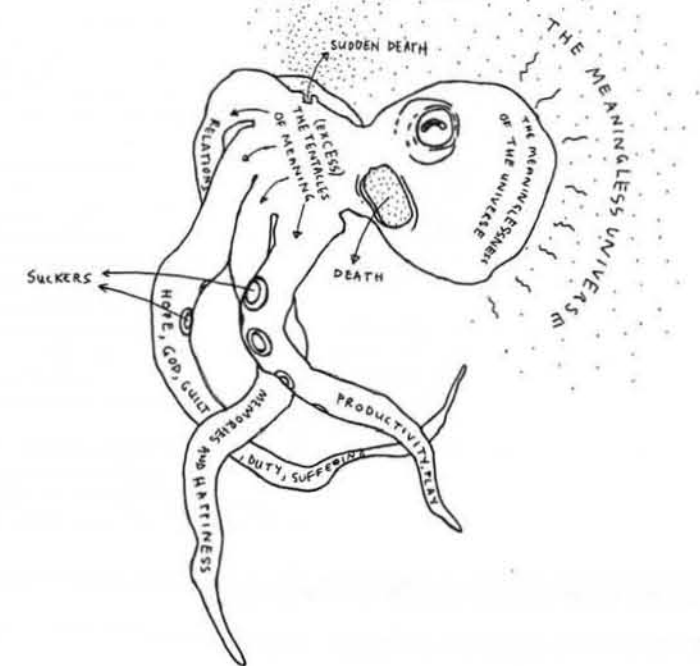
MEANINGLESS AS THE LACK OF BELIEF IN THE MEANINGFUL BUT NOT THE VOID.

NOT REALLY NEEDING TO ESCAPE (JUST TO HAVE A ROUTE).

The tone of this passage, and more specifically the use of a common sense of guilt, echoes Critchley's penchant for the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and his idea of the ethical subject as an embodied subject of "flesh and blood...conditioned by life...who knows what it means to give bread to the other from its own mouth" (Critchley 2002: 20-21). Indeed, albeit within a possibly opportunistic over-interpretation, Critchley's choice of Beckett's words, "you're on earth there's no cure for that", bears strong resemblance to Levinas' gut-wrenching "for what is an individual if not a usurper" who "exists by assassination" (quoted in Žižek 2004: 7).

Interestingly, there is a legislative tool within the judicial system of the United States that accounts for this possibility. Termed 'the absurdity doctrine' (see Manning, 2003, for a more seasoned analysis and definition) it provides judges with the option to revisit a given judgement if the application of legislation within the case quite obviously leads to an 'absurd' conclusion (one which is in blatant opposition to given society's social values). Granted, it is due to a sparse understanding of the law, influenced more by Kafka than any official source, that I am able to find this 'doctrine' extremely interesting in that it serves ultimately as an escape route from the immovability of legislative principles. What the need for an absurdity doctrine illustrates is the impossibility of functioning within the existing principles of the law alone and therefore their failure to be comprehensive and objective (features that legitimate the judicial system and the law itself). Manning (2004: 7) argues against it for this very reason (to protect "legislative supremacy [and] the even handed application of statutes" and prevent "ad hoc exceptions to generally worded laws") in spite of the "seemingly odd" or 'awkward' results that the removal of an absurdity doctrine would undoubtedly cause. Seeking to eradicate the unpredictability that "vaguely defined social values" (Manning 2004: 7) introduce to the inner workings of the law, Manning's attempt to discredit the absurdity doctrine introduces the issue of aporia as justice as discussed by Drucilla Cornell in *Philosophy of the limit* (1992: 118-119, 133-135) where judgement (opposed to calculation which does not require social legitimation) must appeal to social values in order to legitimate it and must therefore enter into the territory of 'vague' and imagined collective conceptions of justice.

(The term aporia describes an "unpassable path" (Macey 2000: 18) or a "pathless path" (Critchley 2004: 194) that requires one to either stop and stand still, or jump. Reaching an aporia within the process of making a decision is central to Derrida's formulation of undecidability and the impossibility of knowing completely or calculating without room of error, where a decision requires a leap and is "something obscure...even mystical".) (See Derrida, Cilliers, van de Merwe & Degenaar 1999: 281-283, and Wittgenstein 2004: 88).



explanation; death; meaninglessness; animals (octopus); geography (outer-space)

(Immediately above) illustration showing the metaphysical properties of the octopus.

our wretchedness is not our greatness; Simon Critchley; Alain Badiou; pricks; architecture (empire); direction; Emmanuel Levinas; people; Ludwig Wittgenstein; Samuel Beckett; Dave Hickey; absurdity; Franz Kafka; productive confusion; anxiety; laughter; proximity; positions (neighbour); Emmanuel Levinas

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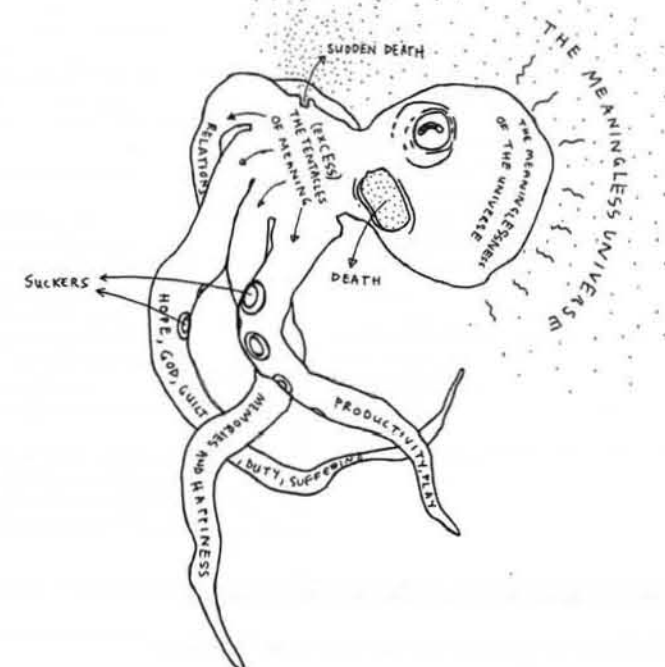
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explanation; death; meaninglessness; animals (octopus); geography (outer-space)

(Immediately above) illustration showing the metaphysical properties of the octopus.



doctors; public performance; language (word games); wild promises

Flyers printed and distributed to pedestrians on Adderley Street, Cape Town.

11. Hole theory, like most theories,  
Suffers from an airiness.  
Wittgenstein might describe it as  
That which leaves  
The ground of meaning  
Part of the problem, I believe  
Is the word: Theory  
Maybe I should substitute 'Theory'  
With the word: 'Practice'  
Or: 'Catechism' Or: 'homework'

12. Hole theory is guided  
By blindness.  
Blind folk cannot see  
Yet they have the courage  
To move about in the world  
Bumping into things,  
Narrowly missing things  
Trying to get things done  
In the face of what might seem,  
To a sighted person,  
An obvious life-limiting lack...

12.1. I'll say it again differently:  
Hole Theory does not belong  
To those who can see. It belongs to  
those who can imagine.

13. Hole Theory, its construction,  
Is misleading. It promises castles  
Where only little houses can happen.  
But little can be everything.

13.1. Hole theory is guided  
By a lack to be with  
The world and in so being  
Be right with the world.

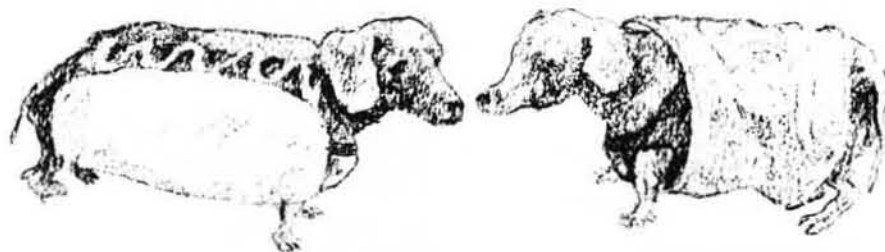
13.2. Within this tension,  
Miracles abound,  
Planets go crazy,  
Babies laugh,  
Friends and families die  
And the sun rises  
And sets.

13.3. how is one to decide  
How to be right  
Within the lack of  
The world?

(William Pope.L. in Bessire 2002: 85-99)

William Pope.L.; holes; intensity; lack; oneiric house; blindness as a model for seeing; pedagogy

(Above) the principles of Hole Theory.



animals (dog); food (hot-dogs); funny stuff

Charcoal pencil on paper.

architecture (exedra); lies; money; geography (territory); third; collaboration; Douglas Gimberg; Christian Nerf; Barend de Wet; Ronan Xavier; Johan Kritzinger; Andrea Fraser; Nuno Sacramento; David Byrne; Brian Eno; truth; Jacques Coetzer; Sebastian Charilou; Ruth Sacks; Samuel Herzog; Ron T Beck; dead horse (beating); space-time (smooth); Takuro Otaka

Discussion initiated by Johan Kritzinger and facilitated by Christian Nerf, Douglas Gimberg and Barend de Wet on *Acting on orders* (a work by Nerf, Gimberg and de Wet that invited American citizens at the Emergence exhibition (May 2008; Governors Island, New York), curated by Kritzinger, to send orders to the trio to be enacted without question in Cape Town) (see <http://www.actingonorders.blogspot.com>).

JK: We were certainly not expecting the types of responses to our orders that you presented to us. Please can you provide a little insight into the interpretation you have taken with regards to the commands that you received?

DG: Just because you're saying 'please' doesn't mean that you haven't just given us another command.

SC: I think you fucknuckles have been 'acting out' versus 'acting on'. Giving in to the desires that are forbidden by your Super egos and yet desired by your Ids. Naughty boys!

DG: Insurgent – "A person who rises in active revolt against authority; a rebel, a revolutionary" (the new shorter oxford dictionary 1993). The definition appears to have changed somewhat since 1993 though. Subsequent to 2001 the term has been used consistently in the media to describe the people fighting against the US army's invasions in the various Middle Eastern "conflicts" comprising "the [new] long war". Those fighting against the US in the context of the "Global War on Terrorism" cannot be insurgents because the term by the above definition implies that the US forces have a legitimate authority over those citizens of the invaded states.

RTB: Forward planning and several open supply lines will always facilitate a smooth transition of power. In most cases a defective strategy at the outset will lure the opposition forces into a series of needless engagements. While this is in progress you can protect the specific brand equity of the geographies in question. Maintaining value while occupying the attentions of the opponent defence systems. What has changed so much since Rogers took over is that war is now no longer 'the continuation of politics by other means' (as Carl von Clausewitz suggested all those years ago) but rather an extension of commerce as a result of structural necessity.

SC: What is rather interesting is that the Wikipedia definition, which has been updated subsequent to 2004, is rather comprehensive and describes tactics and methodologies that are not at all dissimilar to those of "terrorists", immediately stripping them of any of the righteousness associated with "revolution". The term is not actually one that should be used as a descriptor outside of the context of a civil war or coup d'état, in this instance the implication of the term is that the Iraqi's are illegitimate in resisting US occupation and brutality.

CN: When one tells someone what to do one has already a picture in mind and perhaps a little prejudiced is forming.

BDW: No expectations make for better reward.

SH: Big expectation though seem more appropriate when one is thing about New York. The City represents somehow THE big expectation since the time of the early colonials.

DG: People like rewards.

DG: There are many different kinds of apples.

CN: The fact that you [looking at Douglas] are 14 years younger than me and I am 14 years younger than you [looking at Barend] played a major role in our decision-making, yes?

DG: I have a problem with authority at the best of times.

DG: I love operating within hierarchical structures because one needn't accept responsibility for any of ones actions! Take that Barend!

BDW: haha

SH: But the first decisions Americans make has already to do with some alienation: If one decides that he is a first world citizen – than he tells himself to some extent what to do (and ergo what to do). Its not only a world classification – it's first of all a self classification. And it's a heavy decision – like a boxer who decides that from now on he will win all the fights – imagine the total panic when he feels his loosing power. Loosing a fight is one thing – if your live concept is threatened that is something else.

SC: Howzit Takuro. Eish, I hear you had a car accident while travelling with Potato?

TK: Now, me and Potato are in Namibia. Moving by hitchhiking. We did some troubles. Our cars taken crash accident. And, everyone was injured. I was safely, but lost the Potato. Then, We were looking for Potato, and We are able to found the Potato. I am very glad.

DG: And I was lying about my age. I'm really 33.

DG: In 1986 Norman Borlaug established the World Food Prize (no comment about the motives) to recognise individuals who have improved the quality, quantity or availability of food around the world, do you think that Takuro should be eligible?

Tom Waits: Once Kissinger said: "we have no friends, America only has interests"...

CN: Yes, we were very conscious of the divide between the Americans and us when we formulated this interaction. Americans see themselves as first world citizens and find themselves in the enviable position of deciding who is third world.

Ronan Xavier: Standing in the face of a primal urge will get you hurt. Moreover, if you roll over like a dog you wake up with globalization. Screw the meek!

RTB: In a world afraid there are fewer escape routes. The screen, flickering in the corner of your lounge 24 hours a day, has been colonised to become the primary mechanism for delivering instantaneous and globalised fear. These screens are also the means for controlling vast geographic tracts in a most efficient manner, because they compress the geography of their broadcast space. This geography is inhabited by disburbed and frightened individuals either contained within the perimeter or outside of it. Those within the perimeter, the citizens, have a strong need to feel safe and are protected by a myriad of systems. The ones who dwell beyond the perimeter either physically or theoretically are regarded as others. They are apart from the inclusiveness of the perimeter and they exist in a zone where everything has been outsourced or 'EXCLUDED from multipolar internationality...' (p109 Virilio, P. City Of Panic. 2007. Berg, New York)

Francis Burger: I'm not so sure, I don't know how seriously you mean that but in any case the idea of a 'primal urge' is ridiculous, I mean who positions the primal, maybe Barend?

BdW: hihhi

DG: Some of my best friends are meek. Hey, Barend, are you okay?

FB: Exactly, its yesterday's news. But on the subject of first and third world, I'd have to agree with Christian, although I don't think that the desire to designate a position on the podium is restricted to American citizens. I mean, people who dig in bins are also seen as victims by those on the upper floors, it's the same sort of sympathetic gesture that keeps the other at a safe distance, like people who throw sweets at kids who beg at car windows. I wouldn't say that the first world is solely responsible for sustaining the distinction either. The whole thing relies on a mutual performance, concessions from both sides, we put flies on our eyeballs and sit in the sun, we do the jig. The first and third world is there for them and us to maintain a fantasy, both psychic and economic, that's supposed to be good for all of us. [Silence] Ok maybe not flies, sorry, I'll just listen.

CN: Things in our collaborations got more complex once they included signs even though they are not essential reading matter to engage the work.

DG: Is Barend ill? Why was he saying 'hihihi...' just now?

CN: Exactly, check out what went down with the Mental Pictures

installation. [laughter]

RX: Mental Pictures? Oh...right.

DG: They're similar to metal pictures, only they're different.



CN: We do translate messages in a different way add to this all the mumbo-jumbo connected with us Africans it would seem obvious that we would envision things differently. Maybe?

DG: Something that was obviously uncommon.

SH: I like the word "mumbo-jumbo" – pronounced like a German word it's very picturesque.

RTB: A degree of opacity may always be a prerequisite vis a vis the unified strategic direction of the combatant forces; their operation under unified command; and for their integration into an efficient team of land, naval, and air forces.

FB: Desire might be a constant force, but it's supply that produces demand, that's Andrea Fraser, paraphrasing Lacan.

Belle and Sebastian: But if you are feeling sinister Go off and see a minister

He'll try in vain to take away the pain of being a hopeless unbeliever...

CN: [turning to Dr Sacramento] Thanks [for the Jagermeister]. Jacques [Coetzer] said it's so hard to be a middle-class guy. How did things work out in Scotland for them and you all?

NS: I tell you what. Being middle class is hard, but being a Portuguese-Mozambiquean middle class curator in Scotland is much, much harder!!! Is Scotland a middle ground between ZA and the US? Can you pass the me the bottle of Jager, please?

BdW: sigh

CN: Loosing control?

BdW: hoho

CN: Ja, descending into an alternate thinking doing state, embracing some god-free force to direct us. Does it mean we are out of control?

BdW: yoyo

NS: Sorry guys, I came into the discussion quite late. Can you please tell me WHO IS YOUR CLIENT? Really?

JK: People were also a little surprised that the orders have been withheld from the public. Do you plan to release these commands?

DG: You are assuming that we actually make plans.

DG: There are just so many of them. Every time you turn on the tv, radio, look out the window...

BdW: either or neither nor not only but also.

CN: Never.

RTB: Orders may be delivered down a continual supply chain or by asymmetrical mechanisms. In all cases the integrity of the communications needs to be authenticated by means of reverse triangulation.

DG: Are you sure we shouldn't call a doctor or something for Barend?

DG: yes, never, what would be the value of the information?

CN: On second thought everything is for sale in America...

[laughter]

...so make us an offer!

BdW: hehe

[laughter]

SH: You could also sell some third-world-rights (like the right to loose a fight).

DG: Cash only, please.

BdW: People must do what they want.

NS: By the Way (BdW). Can you tell me who your client is?

SH: Maybe you try to FREE America – that's a nice idea.

DG: So long as it's very close to what we want too.

DG: Or what somebody else tells them to do. "Satan told me to kill the children". The parents, of course, blame Slipknot.

CN: Maybe Jesus told them? Anyways we have withheld all of the real evidence regarding our escape to Robben Island.

DG: Ah, good choice of words there, it implies that we actually did it! Excellent.

NS: I am sorry to say the only time you were to Robben Island was in a tourist boat. Not on that sculpture.

BdW: .....

DG: Fucking hell!

JK: Your participation in Emergence relied heavily on an innovative use of internet technology to interact / present the work. The internet allows for global communication and information sharing but below the surface there is always the challenge of defining authenticity and the spreading of 'mis-information'. How has technology and these challenges influenced your work?

[laughter]

DG: Aaaaah, technology. Technology and Progress, don't they just go hand in hand, they certainly both hinge on communication. Better lives

for all ahead! A friend of mine, Inge Papp, recently made the mistake of saying that the truth was what separated people from animals. Yes I said, the difference between the two is that only the humans can lie.

CN: Wiki says Misinformation is wrong or inaccurate information. It is distinguished from disinformation by motive – misinformation is simply erroneous, while disinformation, in contrast, is intended to mislead.

SH: Some years ago I tried to put an article about a fictitious island (a old project of mine) on Wiki. It began with the sentence: "Santa Lemusa is a fictitious island..." The Wiki-community discussed the case. Some found a fictitious island had no relevance on Wiki – others found that it was a kind of misinformation. And two said that I should simply leave out the word "fictitious" and try again.

DG: The line from the movie V for Vendetta springs to mind: "artists use lies to tell the truth while politicians use lies to cover the truth up."

BDW: Authentic and unauthentic mixed.

RTB: Well you should never believe your own mythology, this tends to be a common tactical error in these kinds of situations.

CN: The experiment was conceived to come alive online.

DG: Like the porn industry.

BDW: Where does truth begin and end?

DG: It is all in the motive.

CN: Anyways, back to JK's question of defining authenticity.

DB & BE: This groove is out of fashion...

DG: Except for all that stuff that we accidentally leaked all over the Internet that was the gospel truth.

BDW: mumble mumble

NS: Sorry for being so persistent. I see you guys received orders from afar. Some you followed closely and to some others you said 'Get the fuck!'. This is a freedom that the Guild artists of the medieval and academy artists of the renaissance times never had. They had to use very very subtle symbolism to take the piss out of their masters and clients. The church and the aristocracy of those days were contemporary US of today. All powerful or at least they thought so... while it lasted! As time went by, and with the appearance of photography, depiction of clients did not really fall in the hands of artists anymore. They had to re-invent painting, which was by now a clientless art form. One of the people in charge of that, painted with light (like photography), isolated himself in France, chopped his ear off (no Belle and Sebastian for Vincent) and drank himself to death (No Jagermeister, Absinth it was!). He was responsible for the clientless art of the 20th Century. The autonomous art that hid itself behind walls in white galleries...

Meanwhile two wars and the large advance of industry joined creativity and client in the emerging art of Design. Americans and Germans were amazing at it. At the end of last century this was the scenario: a decadent but clever clientless art and an often basic and streamlined art of designed client consumption. You guys are somewhere in between and this marks a time, even a shift in paradigm. You receive orders like medieval and renaissance artists and deliver them as you wish and according to your own principles like little Van Goghs. What are you really, and who the fuck is your client?

Now go make a fire and ignore the questions that really matter. And pass me the absin... Jagermeister again!

CN: OK, shall we make a fire?

BDW: Yes please.

SC: I am going home to watch Dr Zhivago. Do you remember the line 'No doubt they will sing in tune after the revolution'?

TK: Potato and I will come with.

DG: Shall I go buy the meat and some hot dog rolls?

DB&BE: These beats are 20 years old...

**Gilles Deleuze; Samuel Beckett; positions (the exhausted); exhaustion; language (as a surface); death; voice; language (combinatorials); art; knife-holder; holes**

Excerpts from Gilles Deleuze's *The Exhausted* (1995).

*"But exhaustion allows no lying down and, when night falls, remains sitting at the table, empty head in captive hands, 'Head sunk on crippled hands'... 'One night as he sat at his table head on hands...Lift his past head a moment to see his past hands...skull alone in a dark place pent bowed on a board ...hands and head a little heap'" (Deleuze 1995: 5 with citations from Worstward Ho and Stirrings Still by Samuel Beckett).*

*"It is the most horrible position in which to await death, sitting without the force either to rise or lie down, watching for the signal [coup] that will make us draw ourselves up one last time and lie down forever. Seated, you can't recover, you can no longer stir even a memory. The rocker in her rocking chair [la berceuse] is still imperfect in this regard, what's required is that she/it stop" (Deleuze 1995: 6).*

*"Language names the possible. How could you combine what has no name, the object = X? Molloy finds himself faced with a small strange thing, composed of 'two crosses joined, at their point of intersection, by a bar' equally stable and indiscernible on its four bases. Future archeologists, if they find one in our ruins, will, as is their wont, probably interpret it as a religious object used in prayers or sacrifices. How could you enter it into a combinatorial if we don't know its name, 'knife-holder'?" (Deleuze 1995: 6, with citations from Beckett's Molloy).*

*"If it is the ambition of the combinatorial to exhaust the possible with words, however, it must constitute a meta-language, a very special language in which the relations of objects are identical to the relations of words, and words then would no longer offer realization to the possible, but would themselves give to the possible its own (precisely exhaustible) reality" (6).*

*"...this atomis language in Beckett – disjunctive, abrupt, jerky, where enumeration (listing, inventories) replaces propositions, and combinatorial relations replace syntactic relations – a language of names" (7).*

*"...and he knew the reason for this growing intolerance from the beginning: the specific difficulty of 'boring holes' in the surface of language so that, 'what lurks behind it' might appear at last. You can do this on the surface of the painted canvas, like Rembrandt, Cezanne or Van Velde; or on the surface of sound, like Beethoven or Schubert, to allow the sudden appearance of the void or the visible per se, silence or the audible per se; but, 'Is there any reason why that terrible materiality of the word surface should not be capable of being dissolved ...?' It is not only that words lie; they are so burdened with calculations and significations, with intentions and personal memories, with old habits that cement them, that their surface, barely broken, heals over again. It sticks together. It imprisons and suffocates us. Music arrives to transform the death of some young girl into a dead young girl; it operates this extreme determination of the indefinite like a pure intensity piercing the surface...But words, with their adherences that keep them in the general or the particular, cannot do this. They lack that 'punctuation of dehiscence', that 'disconnection' that comes from a groundswell peculiar to art" (Deleuze 1995: 21-22 with citations from two reprinted texts in Beckett's Disjecta).*

07,  
2008

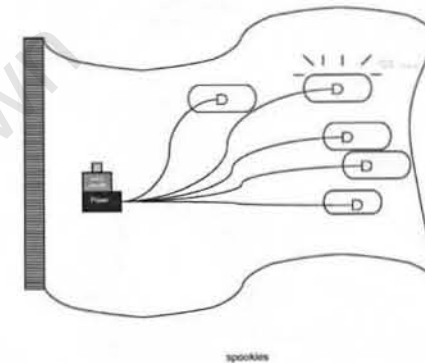


*wheeling about with one foot nailed to the ground; circular performance; kitsch*

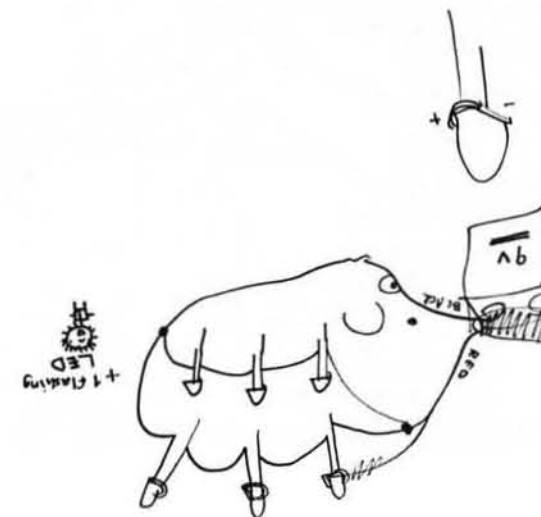
Mechanised plastic boat with silicone, wood, tape, nails and plasticine driver (rigged to drive in circles).

*public performance; spookies; concurrent events; funny stuff; today will be different*

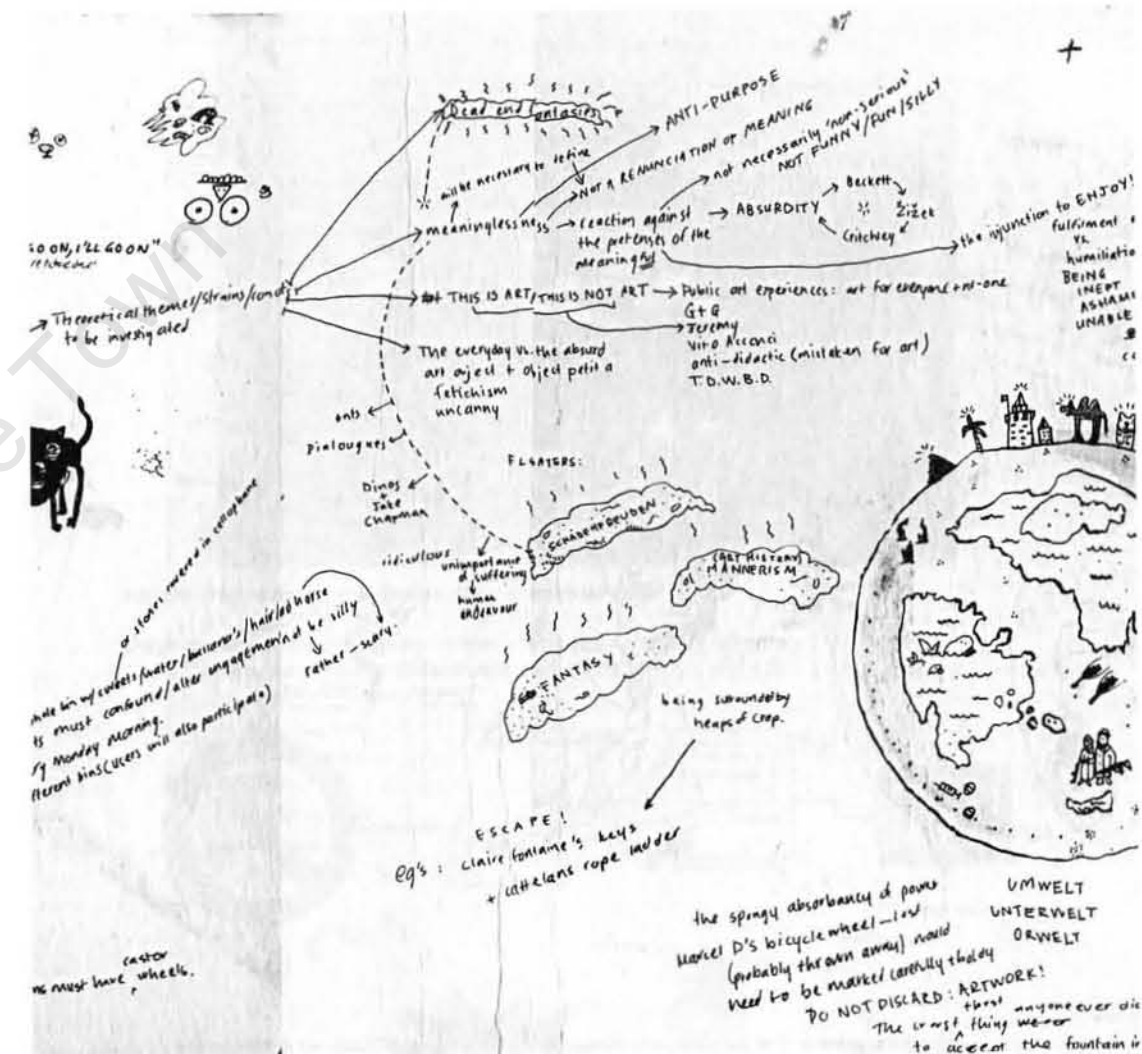
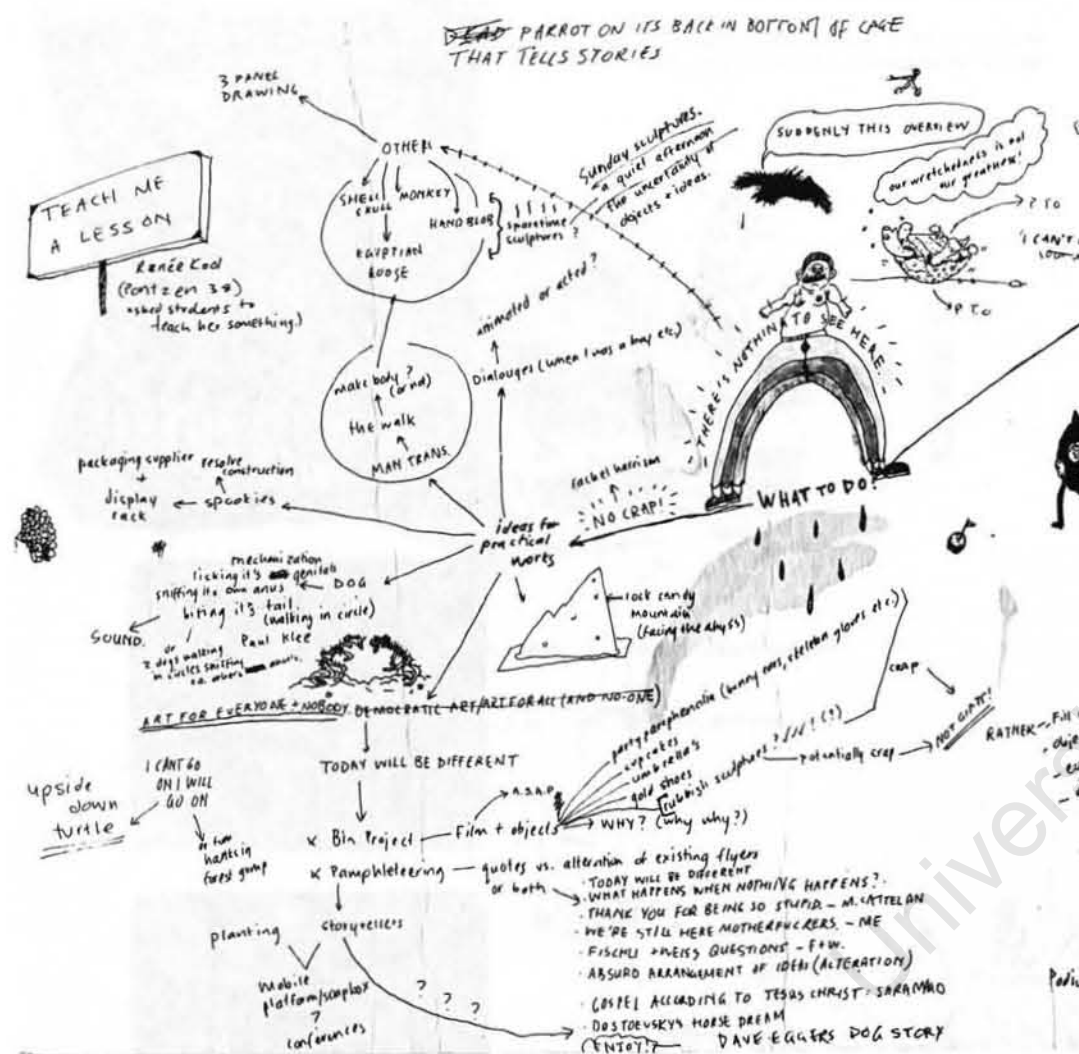
Documentation and preparatory diagrams for special edition Spookies (power cuts flavour) with LEDs.

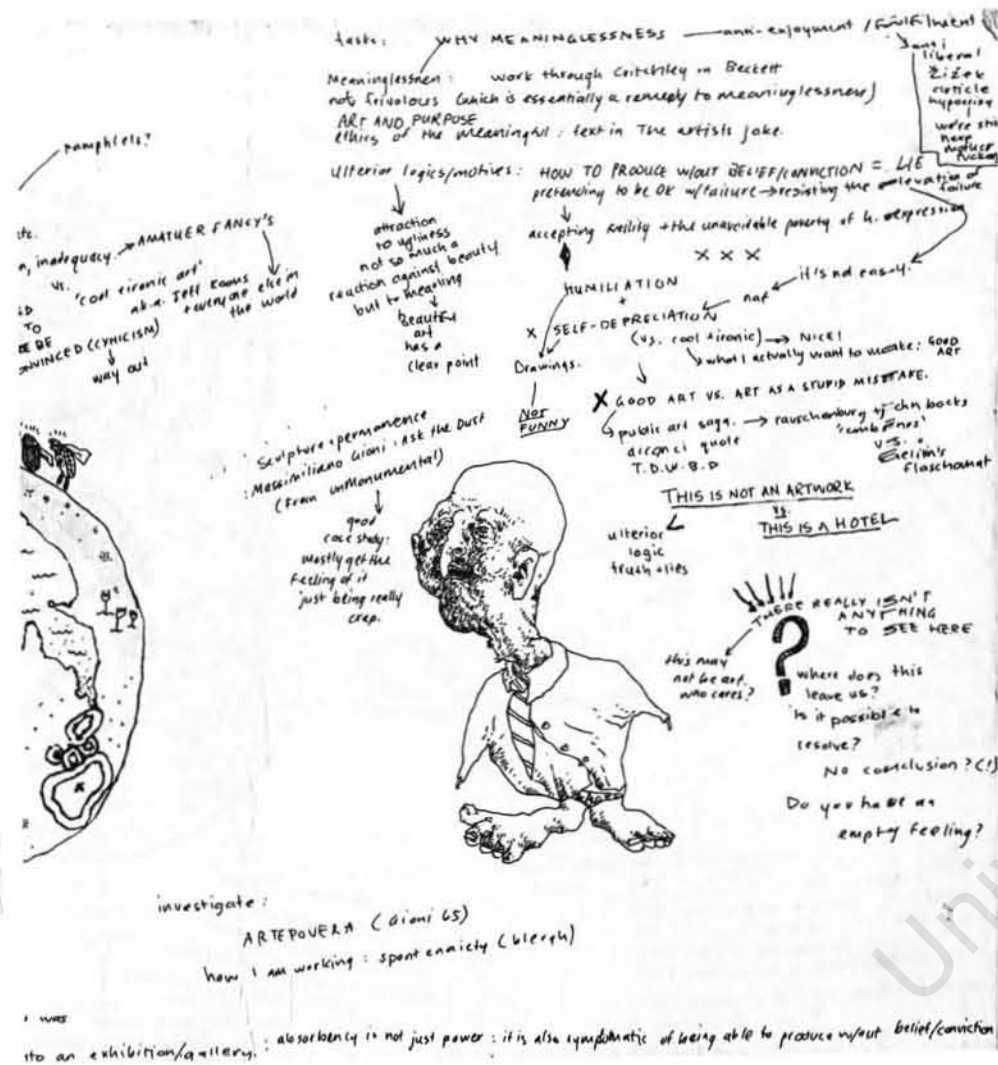


spookies



Mind-map (continued on following pages).





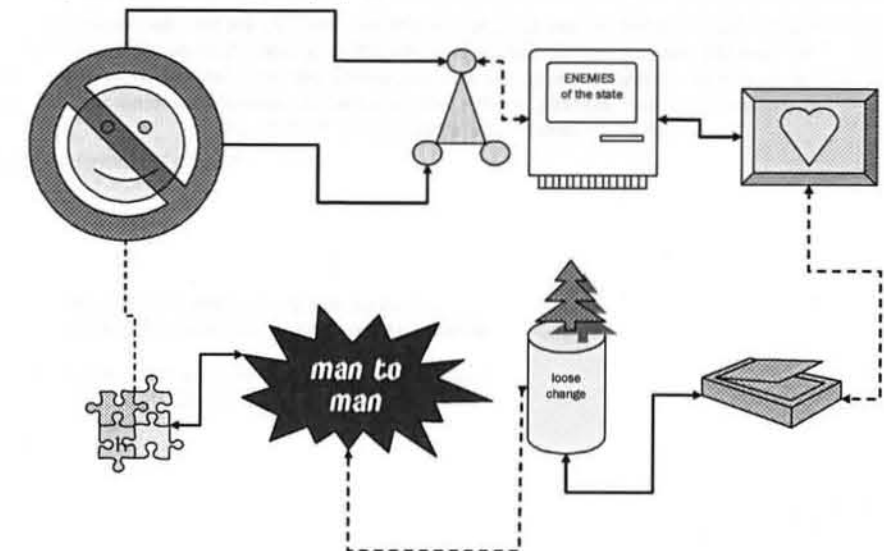
what happens when nothing happens; sunday sculptures; reasonable and unreasonable combinations

Bread and pizza with lake.



architecture (empire); interaction; flow; love; dead ends

Diagram showing the interactions between the subject and the problems of money, love, the state and other people.





"And I think we need to learn from real people. As artists, we are not real people. We have to listen and see like real people and not be so literary. Real people have amazing ways of communicating, because they cannot talk, they don't have newspapers, they don't have anything, so they talk with gestures, symbolic gestures, and that's very clear" (Tania Bruguera in Cohn 2006: 29).

**artists vs. real people; Tania Bruguera;  
reasonable and unreasonable combinations**

Found image and quote from Tania Bruguera in  
conversation with Melanie Cohn (2006: 29).

**Andrea Fraser; gold; shit; something to believe in; honesty;  
agency; fight fight fight; money**

Andrea Fraser: I don't think art has any more of a capacity to produce radical change than any other sphere of human activity. I do believe that art can and should be a site of reflection and resistance, critique and contestation, and realize the potential of its historical development as a relatively autonomous field. At this point, however, art doesn't even seem capable of defending that autonomy, much less taking on society, except in its own flights of fancy. And that's where belief tends to come into play, sustaining the fantasies of creative omnipotence—including the power to change the world, despite all evidence to the contrary—with which artists flatter themselves and their patrons. If reason is unconscious, its logic is wish fulfillment but only in fantasy. The perennial promise of art is to turn those fantasies into reality. The problem, unfortunately, is that enacting one's fantasies is not the same thing as fulfilling the wishes that drive them. Enactment tends to reproduce the very alienation and frustration that engendered those wishes in the first place. There is one area where the art world has been extremely successful in turning fantasy into reality. That is in producing value. If there's one thing we can do effectively in the "real world," it's turn shit into gold. The fundamental basis for the entire economy of art is belief. Belief in the value of art and belief in the value of specific objects as art. There's really no other basis for the art market. I don't know that it can be completely divorced from metaphysical belief. Do the people who spend millions of dollars on a painting really believe in art? Is it only market value? It's easy to say that, but I don't... believe it.

Gregg Bordowitz: Because it's not...

Andrea Fraser: Because I don't want to, probably. A lot of collectors of contemporary art consider their expenditures proof of their belief in art precisely because there is no guarantee of economic value. On the other hand, when people are buying shares of paintings that they will never have in their home, it is hard to imagine that anything more than market value is at stake for them. But I do think this is a fundamental issue, often sidestepped with avant-garde posturing that blames our supporters for supporting us for the wrong reasons. Well, then, let's make it the right reasons, whatever we think they are. We do have agency in that, and I agree with Gregg in that I want art to remain a space where those questions are asked.

Andrea Fraser in Anastas et al. (2006: 124-5).



**explanation; process; the cost of action; theory vs. practice**

(Below) note on additional concerns.

*Additional concerns: Process now as a reaction against the way I was working – where a conception of the physical form had to be preceded (or superseded) by a didactic, ethical motive, that had been disguised as a theoretical or conceptual motive. The aim of my initial proposal this year was to develop a method of working that would allow a different mode of production that allowed contingent associations/constructions. It seems, however, that a license to be spontaneous had to be constructed before I could actually do it. The outcome is precisely 'anything goes', though this is not the same as everything will go or should go. Rather, it generates the possibility for some of 'it' not to go anywhere at all.*

**there is no solution because there is no problem; Tristan Tzara; Richard Huelsenbeck; Hugo Ball; Marcel Duchamp; Ed Young; Michael Smith; Sarat Maharaj; Tirdad Zolghadr; Pablo Picasso; positions (institutionalised prisoner); shit; language (as a surface); art as a mistake**

(Below) collected quotes.

*"We should try to get away from imagining that exhibitions always get everything perfectly right. Whatever can this mean? If curating is an act of translation then we should be prepared for serendipities, for things to go haywire, to go off-beat, even 'mistranslation' of sorts. The show is perhaps less a machine for staging a rounded-off statement or conveying a packaged argument than it is about setting up an experiment, about triggering unfinishable visual and intellectual discussion and debate"*  
(Maharaj 2000: 30).

*"With the definition of success, of course, remaining thoroughly ambiguous in this context"* (Tirdad Zolghadr, March 2008, Frieze, 113: 25).

*"Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try and understand the songs of a bird?...I don't see why the whole world should be taken up with art, demand it's credentials, and on that subject give free rein to its own stupidity. Museums are just a lot of lies, and the people who make art their business are mostly imposters"* (Pablo Picasso, 1935, in Harrison & Wood 1992: 509-510).

*"I do not wish to convince. I have no right to drag others into my river, I oblige no one to follow me"* (Tristan Tzara, 1918, in Harrison & Wood 1992: 253).

*"In any case, art (including culture, spirit, athletic club) is a large scale swindle."* (Richard Huelsenbeck, 1920, in Harrison & Wood 1992: 260).

*"We have developed the plasticity of the word to a point which can hardly be surpassed."* (Hugo Ball in Harrison & Wood 1992: 251).

*Essentially, [Duchamp's] Fountain has become another work of art which, to paraphrase Claes Oldenburg, sits on its ass in a museum* (Smith, Michael 2007: 159).

*"...we definitely need more biennales and art fairs...since the early nineties, artists and prominent practitioners of the art world have tried to define contemporary production on their own terms, which in turn resulted in the explosion of art fairs and biennales. Galleries have become important again. Administrators curate curators. There is no work really. There are nice uncomfortable dinner parties"* (Young 2007: 229).



**positions (institutionalised prisoner); honesty; architecture (gallery); Robert Weinek; Christian Nerf; Douglas Gimberg; Ronald Suresh Roberts; lies; courtesy; Tom Morton; Maurizio Cattelan; Slavoj Žižek; appointed vs. disappointed**

(Above) Ronald Suresh Roberts giving the opening speech for *Touching Moments* (2008) at the IZIKO South African National Gallery. (Below) Text written for the project's blog ([www.southafricannationalgallery.blogspot.com](http://www.southafricannationalgallery.blogspot.com)).

**I care. Touching Moments at the IZIKO South African National Gallery. Francis Burger 2008.**

*"Procedure, after all, has been followed in each case, and, as any bureaucrat will tell you, this is much more important than the phantom stuff of truth"*  
Tom Morton, 2005: 207.

Conceived as a plan B to what would have been a more legitimate exhibition (complete with authorized wall space, windows, and real friends) *Touching moments* confidently vacillates between work and play, self-irony and ill-conceived judgment. As a project it forges and occupies a space within the precinct of art that, in open recognition of its impoverished currency, makes it all seem worth while.

Invited by Robert Weinek to facilitate an exhibition with the 'young curators' (participants in an idols' styled, eighteen month curator workshop/program organized by Cape) with no space and hardly any budget, Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg resorted to hijacking whatever exhibition was on at the South African National Gallery (SANG). Only to find that there was hardly anything there. Two of the main exhibition spaces were empty, the others filled with the somewhat staid permanent collection, the yield of the illustrious Pancho Guedes and a moving but nonetheless untouchable Ernest Cole exhibit. Finding out from a cleaning lady what we were unable to extract from the front desk (that the upcoming exhibition was work by the 'friends of the national gallery') and then from another lady hidden in a spacious cupboard (that it was a members only event) it was conceded that all in all there was not much to think about and quite clearly nothing to hijack. The facilitators resorted to taking photographs of spatial defects.

We met Robert and the young curators at studio 2666 the following morning at 4:30 am. Cajoled on by the early hour, coffee, rusks and old brown sherry, as well as a thought provoking presentation by Christian and Douglas,

the meeting prompted a series of discussions that came as close as possible to what some might be able to call progressive.

One way of approaching Touching Moments (titled after a very politely worded 'do not touch' sign at the SANG) would be to see it as a joke, a handshake with a finger that tickles the inside of your palm, funny because you don't know how else to react but still awkwardly inept at forging any kind of meaningful relation. Provided with envelopes containing a photograph of one of the selected defects which had been formatted as a work of art (artist, title, date) and the instruction to write a 300 word motivation for the work, the young curators generally approached the project in high spirits, squandered their R15 budget on air time, transport and other miscellaneous activities and ended up writing five remarkably convincing texts. Though the texts revert sardonically at times to the generic issues that populate the South African art imagination, they emerged from an opportune position to speak about art from an unquestionably non-serious standpoint and read as earnestly concentrated interpretations. Recited individually at the Cape offices before being published on the project's blog, the initial readings were punctuated by self-deprecating giggles, yet while everyone was clearly enjoying the silliness of it all there was still an element of seriousness that undermined the superficiality of the performance.

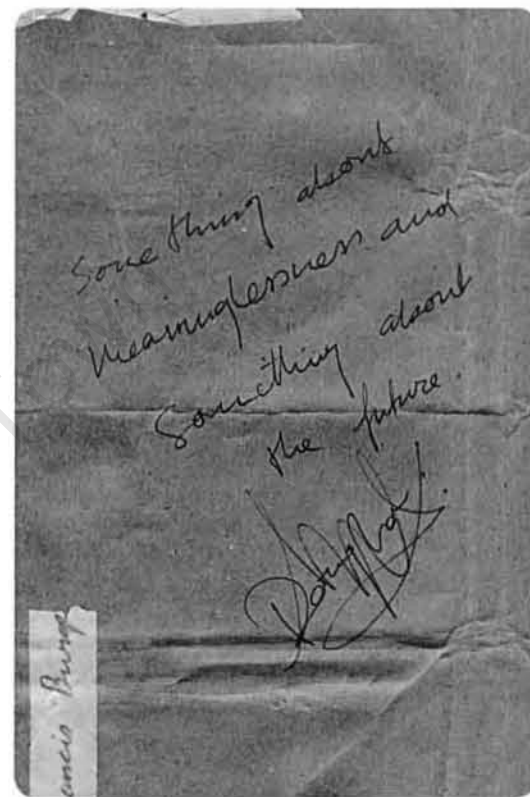
As an experimental process, Touching moments has exhibited the impossibility of art to be taken seriously, as well as the impossibility of its practitioners to take this non-seriousness too seriously. The ineptitude of art to appear as a sincere pursuit elicits an extremely limited reverberation. As Maurizio Cattelan has repeatedly revealed, the borders of art are exceptionally flexible;

What's a guy gotta do to piss someone off around here? You try to move the borders a little bit further, and then you realize how easily the art world can absorb any blow. But that's okay, I guess that's part of the game [...] wasn't the dream of the avant garde to become completely mainstream?"

Maurizio Cattelan quoted by Tom Morton (2005: 208).

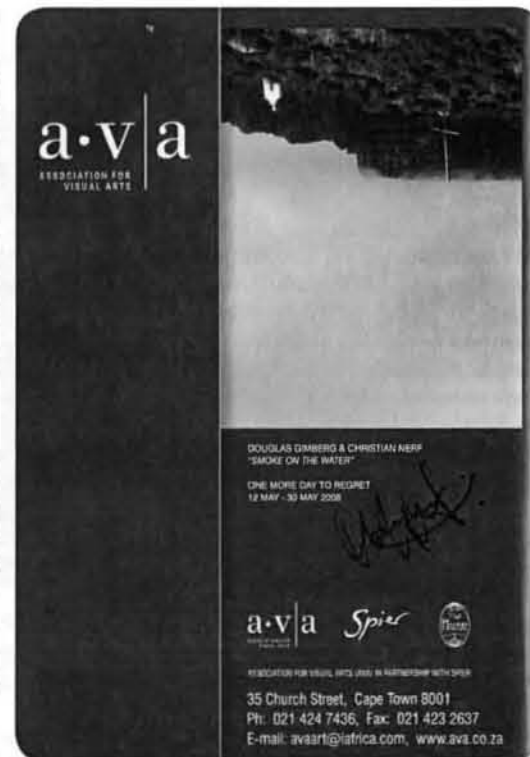
Like the project's blog, which parades itself as an affiliate of the National Gallery, Touching Moments was, to an extent, an attempt to piss someone off, or at least, to take the piss. The opening event, held outside the National Gallery regardless of having no permission whatsoever, elicited more support than opposition from the gallery staff. The director of the gallery came outside and stood with everyone in the rain to listen to Ronald Suresh Roberts' speech – she even praised the event afterwards and expressed disappointment that the soap boxes (a permanent installation by Rosenclaire of bronze soapboxes and a video camera that plays live inside the gallery) hadn't been used as a platform instead. Despite this glaring lack of outrage, a sense of mischief still pervaded the entire occasion, even as everyone returned merrily to their Friday afternoons, with wet paper bagged beers in hand and without so much as a slap on the wrist or a fine for drinking in public. Touching moments was also, therefore, an exhibition of artists and art practitioners who are at home with the futility of their jobs, content to play jokes on themselves and each other without ever needing to laugh too hard. To paraphrase what Tom Morton (2005: 208) so articulately explains, 'like institutionalized prisoners, what we really want isn't liberty at all but rather a bigger cell, a better tobacco allowance and more accommodating wardens'.

Confronted then with the opportunity to stand up for something that no one really believes in, the best course of action is either to lie or do nothing. It's too late to do nothing, and to lie would require an announcement of success, a thigh slapped and a back patted, which would completely undermine the most inspiring aspect of the project, its unashamed failure. To be honest, instead, it is enough to rephrase one of Slavoj Žižek's favourite Marx brother's jokes ('this man looks as an idiot, acts as an idiot; but this should not deceive you – he is an idiot!'), altering to 'this exhibition sounds rubbish, looks rubbish; but this should not deceive you – it is rubbish!'.



**Gimberg Nerf; cacolydates; meaninglessness; public performance; today will be different**

South African Visual Arts Diary received wrapped and bookmarked at an Association for Visual Arts advertisement showing *Smoke on the Water*, (2008) from Douglas Gimberg and Christian Nerf.



productive confusion; art as a liberating proposition; Jennifer Higbie

Excerpt from *How can be creative* by Jennifer Higbie (2007: sp).

"Good confusion reiterates: art is not a code that necessarily needs cracking, it's a liberating proposition"

"... Here, in a short space, is the intertwining of biography, frustration, creativity, the vagaries of success or a lack of it; a hymn to talent, inspiration; and a query about the relationship of music to history with a big H. In other words, it's confusion as a question – confusion as the beginning of something. A few recent conversations illustrate, to varying degrees, what I like to think of as positive confusion.

1) I meet an artist who says that, although he doesn't regret it, he still feels hot with embarrassment for asking Alex Katz for an autograph. When I ask him why he wanted the autograph in the first place, he says that having a little bit of Alex Katz in his house, for reasons he couldn't fathom, would make him 'feel that everything would somehow be OK'. He didn't specify what he needed to feel OK about and I didn't pry. However, he did add that despite the embarrassment, the autograph does sit on his mantelpiece, and yes, it does make him feel OK. (This little anecdote reminded me once again that one of the best things about art is that even if you don't thoroughly understand either its motivations or your own for liking it, you can nonetheless bring the idea of it – which is always an idea of possibility – into your home and live with it, gratis, to mull over. Who cares if the reasoning here is, well, a little bewildered? After all, whoever said the creative act should be logical?)

2) I am in Xiamen in Southern China, in a restaurant called 'The White House' which, bizarrely, is a mini version of The White House on Capitol Hill. A young artist I meet has made a film about a madman in a local park, who sings old songs from the Cultural Revolution. When I ask the young artist how he feels about this period of Chinese history, he says he doesn't want to know about it, it's all too confusing. All he wants now is the chance to make art about being alive now and, anyway, his parents wouldn't talk to him about what happened back then. But, he implied, he was open to suggestion.

3) When I return from China I spend a week writing a catalogue essay for a friend. She emails me saying that despite being 'obsessed with biography' she realizes that she has no respect for it as a genre. This push-me pull-you attitude to her subject-matter is confusing. After some discussion, however, she tells me that her approach is really 'a way to accept that representation cannot exist without guilt, desire, ambivalence, ownership.'

4) The other night I get into a conversation with a great painter who tells me that when she makes pictures she likes to think of the famous story about Turner, who apparently strapped himself to the mast of a ship in a storm in order to draw it. To be in the eye of the storm, she says, and to have ideas and images flung at you from all directions; to make images that are layered and difficult, to make images for reasons that even the artist doesn't entirely understand; to try and react with compassion and imagination to the confusion and contradictory impulses that constitute a life. This, she tells me, is what good art is. And who am I to argue with that?"

(Higbie 2007: sp).



knife-holder; something to do; space-time (smooth); body (feet)

Stills from a cellphone video of a foot-radar scanning the balcony and the view.



*a time for comprehending; truth; animals (monkey);  
death; body (excrement); shit*

Monkey sculpture with enamel, pigeon  
faeces, shell and dried seaweed.

B.B.88.

402



*gold*

Gold leaf received from Anja de Klerk.

B.B.77.1.

403





**one more day to regret; Gimberg Nerf; truth; enantio-  
dromia; architecture (garden); positions (satanist)**

Exhibition invitation for Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg's *One More Day to Regret* (12 May - 30 May 2008 at the Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town). Image shows Gimberg and Nerf alongside a newly planted apple tree in Paradise, a leafy suburb in Knysna in the Western Cape (*Planting an apple tree in Paradise*, 2008).

meaninglessness; architecture (boat); architecture (prison); Gimberg Nerf; escape to Robben Island; violence; positions (hero); Tristan Tzara; Willem Boshoff; Barend de Wet; erotic tendency; one more day to regret; the real fuckup

Article on Douglas Gimberg and Christian Nerf's *Escape to Robben Island*, 2008, (Burger 2008: 38-39).

On Friday, May 9, artists Christian Nerf and Douglas Gimberg acted out the title of their most perilous collaboration to date, *Escape to Robben Island* (2008). Accompanied by the multi-talented yo-yo artist Barend de Wet, the pair launched off the shore of Blouberg Strand and rowed their way to the former prison in their newly finished wooden boat, the *angasi nkosi*, *angasi nkosi* (a Zulu adaptation of Louis-Auguste Blanqui's "neither God nor master"). The testimonies posted on the project's blog tell a harrowing tale of big waves, vomit, unimaginative security guards, and a "fast and ugly fucking motor cruiser". "There was no time to really be scared but it was scary!" recalls De Wet, "we are on the ocean and row and take pictures and video and row and Christian gets sea sick and boats and helicopters and the ferry and Robben Island gets very close and with great excitement we arrive! We are met by different people and after talking and not allowed on the island and with sea legs we are told to take our boat and leave the island. A last resort was asking some rich assholes for a lift but no cigar."

After moving the *Corsa-bakkie* sized boat back to their residency space at Kwa Mlamli in Gugulethu, with nothing to show for the day's events other than blistered hands, shaved faces and fragile dispositions, Nerf and Gimberg finalised arrangements for the much anticipated conclusion of their project, *The real fuck-up*. Propped belly up in the damp sand behind Mlamli's, viewers crowded around the *angasi nkosi*, *angasi nkosi* that same evening and took turns to hack at a demarcated space on her hull. Despite the drunken, axe-wielding frenzy that seemed to be building up, the viewers eventually lost interest and turned back to the music and the bar, leaving the boat, with its gaping hole, to no longer be mistaken for a boat.

One of many in Gimberg and Nerf's ever-increasing repertoire of collaborative works, *Escape to Robben Island* and its aftermath was presented in an exhibition titled *One more day to regret*, at Cape Town's Association for Visual Arts the following week. In the main gallery the suddenly incapacitated *angasi nkosi*, *angasi nkosi* lay on its side in the half light while viewers squeezed through the clamped inter-leading doors of *The Styx* (an empty corridor usually used as an additional exhibition space) to listen to Willem Boshoff's opening speech about Cerberus (Hades' dog), Anonymous (Nerf's dog) and drinking from the pools of memory and forgetting. Despite being the apparent climax of the artists' year-long alliance, the *One more day to regret* exhibition lacked any trace of a legitimating rationale *Escape to Robben Island*. *Art South Africa*. July 2009. It and provided very little, indulging only those who didn't demand to be given something conveniently meaningful. Sticking to their decision to only show concrete evidence of the trip in ten years time, Gimberg and Nerf replaced what could easily have been a series of heroic portraits of smiling (or grimacing) faces at sea with a large, digitally constructed image of their voyage and a ratcheted-shut travellers trunk, a broken boat-like object, and a darkened corridor. Clouding an almost believable story with a web of ambiguous associations and continuously covering their tracks, Gimberg and Nerf declined to frame their exploits as altruistic offerings of accomplishment, capitalising instead on the power of an enigmatic fantasy to overcome the trivialities of truth and falsity. As with *The real fuck-up*, where one participant tried to stop the destruction by shielding the boat with his body, the mystery of whether the escape took place or not incited a variety of responses – some viewers of *One more day to regret* even tried to break in to the travellers trunk (possibly after hearing that it contained the withheld evidence). Though more subtle in its provocation than other works by Gimberg and Nerf, *Escape to Robben Island* maintained the pair's proclivity for setting up irresistible situations and waiting patiently for viewers to take the bait, be it the opportunity to take an axe to a wooden cross (*Carpentry 101*, 2007) or a wooden boat; the ease of a buy-now-pay-later sculpture exchange (*Buyer and seller of souls*, 2008); a speech by Willem Boshoff; or installing a ladder over the only entrance to the gambling room at the Kimberley Hotel (*There's something fruity going on*, 2008).

Enduringly attentive to the absurdity of human endeavour and well travelled in the festive swamps of obscurantism, Gimberg and Nerf sidestep art's assumed clause of giving and receiving, compelling the viewer to do more. Like the Dadaist poet Tristan Tzara who teasingly declared in 1918, "I do not wish to convince. I have no right to drag others into my river; I oblige no one to follow me", Gimberg and Nerf do actually want to drag you into their river. Though not necessarily to follow them.



Any concerted attempt to understand the links between the various divergent processes that compose the overall project is at once obstructed by this lack of legitimate rationale. As the various discrepancies are revealed it becomes evident that in the place of a well explained motivation the artists have instead constructed a convoluted web of ambiguous associations, exploited coincidences, breached narratives and dead-end clues. This obstruction, a series of intentionally unfilled gaps that spoil the possibilities of confident comprehension, immediately instigates a flurry of interpretive responses.

One of the easier interpretive alternatives would be to simply deny a rationale altogether and frame Gimberg and Nerf's undertakings as indulgent adventures, Scooby Doo type mysteries that dabble with the dark arts and the deep seas; playful pursuits that amicably expose the futility of art to those who take it all too seriously. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your personal predilection, this projective vision of two men showing off the evidence of their various maritime, horticultural, destructive and escapist fantasies for viewers to actively enjoy is disrupted by the very obstruction that prompted its application in the first place. Gimberg and Nerf's employment of a deliberate and strategic exchange that provides one piece of information while enshrouding another suggests that the lack of information, of reasoning and explanation is not the reactive product of a hostility towards explanation (or even over-explanation) but rather of an appreciation of obscurity that is allowed to remain obscured rather than be glossed over by silliness or solemnity. The indications of an approach that is sympathetic to futility within Gimberg and Nerf's various projects are also indicative, therefore, of an ability to understand the importance of attempting to express the meaninglessness of meaning without feeling the need plaster it over in an attempt to display a sense of awareness that the senselessness of it all is highly problematic, or giggle about it (whether nervously, sarcastically or in earnest). This is not to say that the work is without humour, the absurdity of the project, so enhanced by the insecure paranoia and obsession that its obscurity often provokes in the viewer, ensures that the benefits of self-irony are not lost with the rejection of frivolity and pseudo-sincerity.

The senseless violence that marks the conclusion of the escape project could be framed as an invitation for fun and games, the persuasive command, 'join us', as written on the flyers for *Fuckup* and the *Real fuckup* taken lightly, as a joke. But laughter is yet another release that Gimberg and Nerf do not afford their viewer; the heaving bodies that swing bulky axes and the sweating faces that bend over chisels and hammers cannot simply laugh as if they know exactly what they are doing and why. There is a constant feeling of unease that goes beyond the nervous agitation and self-consciousness that is always part of any performance. The artists themselves maintain this sense of foreboding by never actually participating; though they instigate, supervise and document the interactions, they never actually take part in the destructive activities they offer the viewer, thereby preventing the merriment of camaraderie that would allow the now implicated viewer some resolve or excuse for a lack of understanding. Instead the self-conscious viewer is left feeling like the victim of a cunning deception, duped into participation by artists that chuckle as they review the image of your face, contorted and uncertain as you blunder around with their tools.

The value and charm of the obscure is that it refuses to be resolved, the truthful answer, its true meaning, simply doesn't exist. This does not mean however that it is meaningless; pointless and futile maybe, but not meaningless - when pointlessness is left bare it translates, through interpretation, into obscurity, prompting a radical void of uncertainty that forces further questioning. The obscure is not inaccessible; it is not afraid of or hostile towards understanding and meaning. Pointlessness is not a full stop. There is no limit to meaning, the signifier can never be censored or inhibited. The dead end clues that are scattered throughout Gimberg and Nerf's various exploits may not lead to anything authentic or singular but they are still clues.

**Gimberg Nerf; dead ends; erotic tendency; Ryan van Huyssteen; positions (satanist); positions (hero); language (as excess); truth; productive confusion; I AM SIGNAL**

(Left) excerpts from a longer article on Douglas Gimberg and Christian Nerf's *Escape to Robben Island*, 2008, in collaboration with Ryan van Huyssteen and published on IAMSIGNAL.com.



**kitsch; positions (anonymous); craft (hobby); something to do**

(Immediately above) small statue by an unknown craftsman. Shells on wood and papier maché, 53 cm. From the collection of the *Museo degli argenti* in Florence. Illustrated in Rasponi & Tanzi (1987: 68).



**Gimberg Nerf; one more day to regret; architecture (boat); architecture (exedra); violence; public performance; the real fuckup; gugulective**

Viewers take turns to hack at the hull of the *Angasi Nkosi Angasi Nkosi* at Douglas Gimberg and Christian Nerf's *The Real Fuckup*, 2008, in the backyard of Kwa-Mlamli's in Gugulethu. (The backyard of Kwa Mlamli's functions as a residency and project space facilitated by the Gugulective).

*indulgence; body (excrement); institutionalised bowel movements; lies; meaninglessness; Slavoj Žižek; positions (artist); pornographic tendency; positions (cool and ironic); desire; anxiety; violence; concurrent events; intensity; embarrassment; Samuel Beckett; language (as an expression of nothing to express together with the obligation to express); explanation*

(Below) excerpts from consultation notes and notes to self.

Practicing as an artist often affords the luxury of being allowed to pursue various things, driven simply by an opportunely isolated 'interest', generating a situation where it is necessary to either construct some sort of legitimating structure, keywords framed within rhetorically persuasive sentences that serve to justify the various attributes of the endeavor, or accept and appreciate the ultimate futility of artistic practice.

The idea of wellness is driven by the ideal of the perfectly regulated bowel movement, excretion becoming an event that signifies perfect balance.

Lying and fraud – Žižek, constantly reverses things. Operates as a fraud in order not to be...unable to take his role seriously.

a backwards logic that illustrates how one has to lie in order to avoid becoming a complete fraud, how one has to fail in order to avoid becoming disgustingly triumphant and how one can only avoid the pretence of the meaningful by attempting to express meaninglessness

Beckett – a strategy for the expression of meaninglessness (de-hierarchizing the meaningless, removing the emotive aspect of negative/positive).

In my previous outlines (of my M.A. plans) I have set the function of the above argument as a lead to an incentive to produce in light of and in enjoyment of the futility of it all – essentially it would end up being an advocacy of a less serious art, which I now find rather problematic (a very careful line needs to be drawn between art that is self-aware and ironically non-serious and that which is silly). It would also have been a general praising of the creative act and its potential for the establishment of a 'free' space. There is aspect of this that I would like to retain, the idea of practicing something with a very serious conviction, in full acknowledgement of its absurdly excessive futility is very appealing – it is however not at all restricted to art. This will all need to be reconciled.

There are always difficulties when bringing an actual discussion of art into the arena – I sometimes feel that it should simply be completely ignored, leaving it up to the reader/viewer to decide what it could have to do with art (mistake it for art?). On the other hand, it seems problematic to simply ignore it, since it is ultimately the context of my position/production.

There may also be a need to deal very specifically (if at all) with the issue of 'conceptual retardation' and the desire for 'cool and ironic' art. There is also an aspect of humiliation, or feelings of ineptitude, linked to failure and although I would like to discuss it I am also a bit weary of it since it may just destroy me. But I will continue with it on my own time in the meantime, I think a resolution in this regard will bring unprecedented rewards. One of the reasons for this may be some sort of resolution on the discrepancy between what I am writing about and what I am actually producing as art, which may or may not prove to be a problem. Fortunately I am feeling more and more able to not see it as a problem.

Today's Cape Argus (16 May 2008) front page shows the murder of a man who had been covered in burning blankets, a victim of the escalating violence in Johannesburg against foreigners from other African countries.

*In my own practice I feel that there is both an attempt to front an absolute comfort with meaninglessness and futility, and within this, a far more desperate attempt to disguise an un-interrogated uncertainty with the idea (which appears in the suspiciously self-conscious desire to achieve a form of practice that is, in K. Smiths' words, more 'cool and ironic') (Smith 2007: 12). Rather than the confidence in asserting my position on the meaningless in writing, my actual practice reveals an unsettling level of uncertainty, of fumbling and conceptual retardation. There is potentially a dynamism between these two modes of expression, the text asserting confidently and the work itself undercutting that assertion through the impossibility of its expression.*

B -- Logically none. Yet I speak of an art turning from it in disgust, weary of puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road.

D -- And preferring what?

B -- The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.

D -- But that is a violently extreme and personal point of view, of no help to us in the matter of Tal Coat

B --

D -- Perhaps that is enough for today.

*Samuel Beckett; George Duthuit; positions (the exhausted); language (as an expression of nothing to express together with the obligation to express); repetition*

Excerpt from Samuel Beckett and George Duthuit's Dialogues (1985: 103).



*reasonable and unreasonable  
combinations; body (hair);  
cacolydates; coagitation*

Contact adhesive with beard hairs.  
Received from Gimberg Nerf.

B.B.102.

*art as a mistake; artists vs. real people;  
public performance; dead ends*

(Below) note and documentation from a  
dead end performance.



My suspicion that art could be seen as a mistake developed after an incident that occurred earlier this year; after visiting the V&A Waterfront shopping centre and finding it to be an extreme example of the absurd behavior displayed by people looking for parking (where some will follow you to your parking, even when you are still on foot, inching forward in their cars instead of just driving further and finding their own parking) I decided to develop a work that could capitalize on this situation. I enacted a test run in May; the intention was to park in the free open parking and sit in my car for the day, reading, sipping smoothies, bouncing a tennis ball and garnering reactions from people hunting for parking. I arrived at 9:00 am only to find that the opening time for the free parking had been changed to 9:30 am, so I waited for half an hour with a few other cars, and parked once it opened.

No one waited for me, the only responses I received were a few really nice 'are you leaving?'s from politely smiling faces. There was no rage, frustration, boredom, desperation or stupidity. They were just nice, so I wrote the work off. Nevertheless, sitting there in my car waiting for the parking lot to be opened, there was a real thrill in feeling that I was about to make some art and no-one would know, unsuspecting people would interact with me without ever guessing that they had been part of my project. In the end, the experience effectively reversed my thinking, instead of the other people mistakenly thinking that they weren't art, I was mistaken, sitting there for three hours thinking I was art when I was actually just a person waiting in the car for three hours. The joke was officially on me.



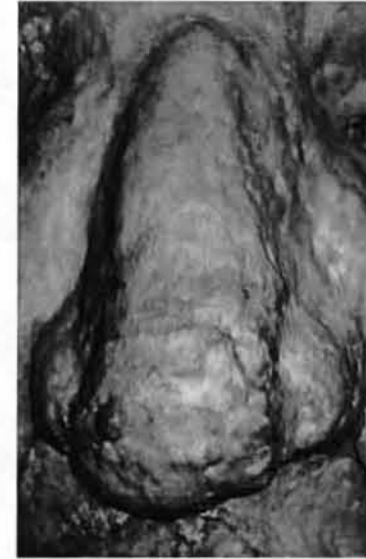
*self-loathing; anxiety; intensity; Robert Crumb*

Robert Crumb, 1994. Cover for *Self-Loathing Comics*. Illustrated on the artist's website ([www.robertcrumb.com](http://www.robertcrumb.com)).



*Barend de Wet; body (building); architecture (garden)*

(Above) digital construction of Barend de Wet as a bodybuilder from the artist's website (de Wet 2008: sp).



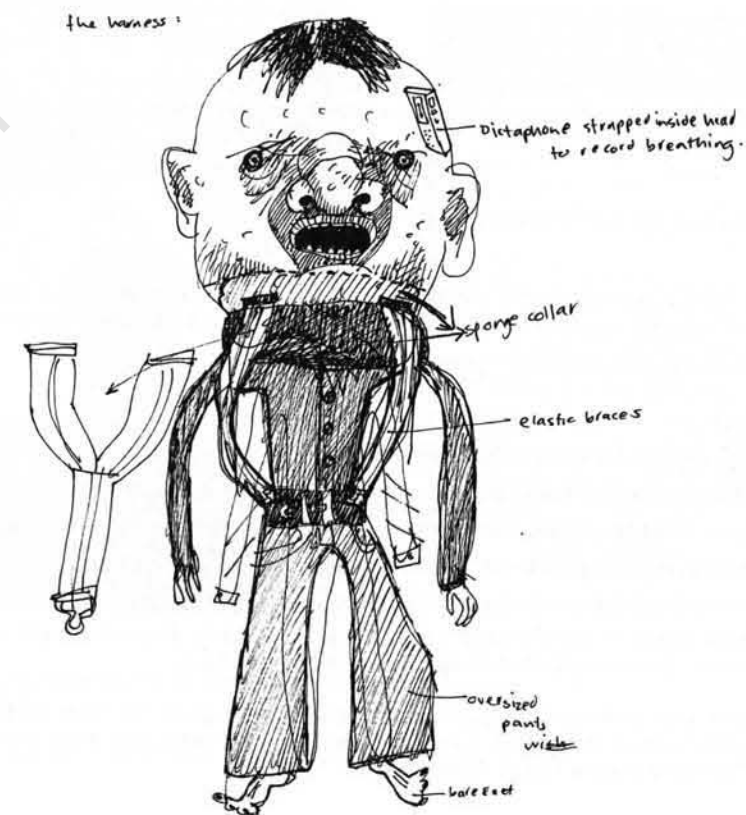
*eccentric performance; something to do; slapstick; let's get stupid; body (nose); misery*

Detail of the *man transforem*. A hollow oversized head constructed with papier maché, oil paint, wax, chicken mesh and false teeth.



*eccentric performance; something to do; slapstick; let's get stupid; dead ends*

Stills from a cellphone video of the man transform being performed.



Sketch for the man transform (shown on preceding pages).



"one shouldn't complicate things for the pleasure of complicating, but one should also never simplify or pretend to be sure of such simplicity where there is none. If things were simple, word would have gotten around..." Mr.D.

There is nothing more ethically repulsive than the idea that, beneath the surface of differences, we all share the same kernel of humanity, of human weaknesses, hopes and pleasures.  
Mr.Z.

Human communication is characterized by an irreducible reflexivity: every act of communication simultaneously symbolizes the fact of communication.  
Žižek 2006: 11

fantasy is on the side of reality z plague of fantasies

"it is much more satisfying to sacrifice oneself for the poor victim than to enable the other to lose the status of victim and perhaps become even more successful than ourselves...." (78)

#### Criticism

The only way to survive the horrific inconsistencies that subsist between the fantasmatic, Symbolic justifications of being (human) and the reality of their perpetually self-referential quality, and that pervade the interactions between the beings we encounter and recognize as our fellow human beings, is to accept the position we find ourselves in, grappling backwards and forwards between the Symbolic and the object.

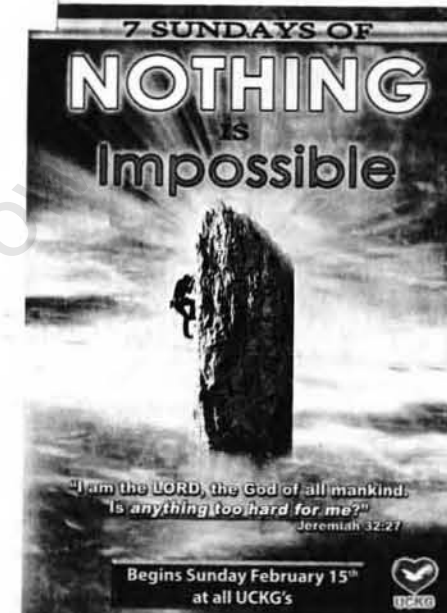
none will accuse of being a usurper the artist who, even if he does not know it, is an undoer of narcissism and of all imaginary identity as well. Ms K.

"beware, even in thought, of assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of griefs is not a proscenium, a man who wails is not a dancing bear" (Césaire cited in Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989: 15)



Jacques Derrida; Julia Kristeva; Aimé Césaire; Slavoj Žižek; language (as circular); dancing bear; misery; people; if things were simple word would have gotten around; masters vs. daddies

Note with collected quotes in preparation for initial presentation to the Masters of Fine Arts seminar group at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts.



STOP

## Stop saying:

*There's is no way out of my problem*

**There is Someone for whom nothing is impossible.** For Him there is no incurable disease, no financial mess that can't be turned around, no marriage that can't be restored, no addiction that can't be broken, and no wound that can't be healed.

Don't give up without allowing the power of this Someone to do the impossible for you... God.

### How do you begin?

Come this Sunday, February the 15th to participate in the "Nothing is Impossible" event, the beginning of a series that will continue for 7 weeks.

You will learn how to fight back with God's power, through practical guidance, and through strong prayers of faith. Place yourself in the hands of the One who can do the impossible, God Himself.

**Service time: 7am & 9:30am**

For more info: [www.nothingisimpossible.co.za](http://www.nothingisimpossible.co.za)

### Please cut off my leg

I had a big wound in my leg and it never healed. Doctors suggested that the only solution was to amputate my legs. I was visited by two ladies from the UCKG whilst in hospital, who told me that God can heal me. I believed, and today I am healed. I am a professional runner, participated in the Cross Country National Championship in 2003 to 2005. I have been running the Comrades Marathon for nine years. God made the impossible to be possible.

**CATHEDRAL OF FAITH**  
9 BUITENKANT STREET  
C B D

nothing; positions (god); propaganda; stop saying please cut off my leg

United Kingdom of God Church flyer recieved in Cape Town.

**Dr. Mamma Marini**  
 4000 W. 1st St. 1st Floor, Cape Town, 8001  
 079 285 3382  
 076 878 8006

**Dr. Mamma Marini**  
 4000 W. 1st St. 1st Floor, Cape Town, 8001  
 079 285 3382  
 076 878 8006

**Dr. Mamma Marini**  
 4000 W. 1st St. 1st Floor, Cape Town, 8001  
 079 285 3382  
 076 878 8006

**Dr. Mamma Marini**  
 4000 W. 1st St. 1st Floor, Cape Town, 8001  
 079 285 3382  
 076 878 8006

**Dr. Kibo & Mama Fatuma**  
 1000 W. 1st St. 1st Floor, Cape Town, 8001  
 079 285 3382  
 076 878 8006

**Dr. Kibo & Mama Fatuma**  
 1000 W. 1st St. 1st Floor, Cape Town, 8001  
 079 285 3382  
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**Dr. Kibo & Mama Fatuma**  
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 079 285 3382  
 076 878 8006

positions (parousiamaniac); doctors; language (word games); something to believe in; prophesy

(Above and on following page) various flyers recieved in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg and Durban advertising the services of traditional healers.

dancing bear; anxiety

(Immediately below) drawing, pen on paper.



"Romanticism is an art without artworks"

(Schmitt in Critchley 2004: 110).

Simon Critchley; hysteric vs. master; art; positions (romantic)

(Immediately above) quote from Critchley (2004: 110).



food (meat); body (flesh); knife-holder; things that pick you up

(Immediately above) meat grinder.



*body (appendage); third; art;  
Barend de Wet*

Fabric clothing label made by  
Barend de Wet as part of an  
ongoing project.

B.A.69.

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*geography (relief);  
things that you pick up; sediment*

(Above right) railway sleeper wedge.



*stones; things that are round (spheroid);  
emollient; exfoliant*

(Left) stone.

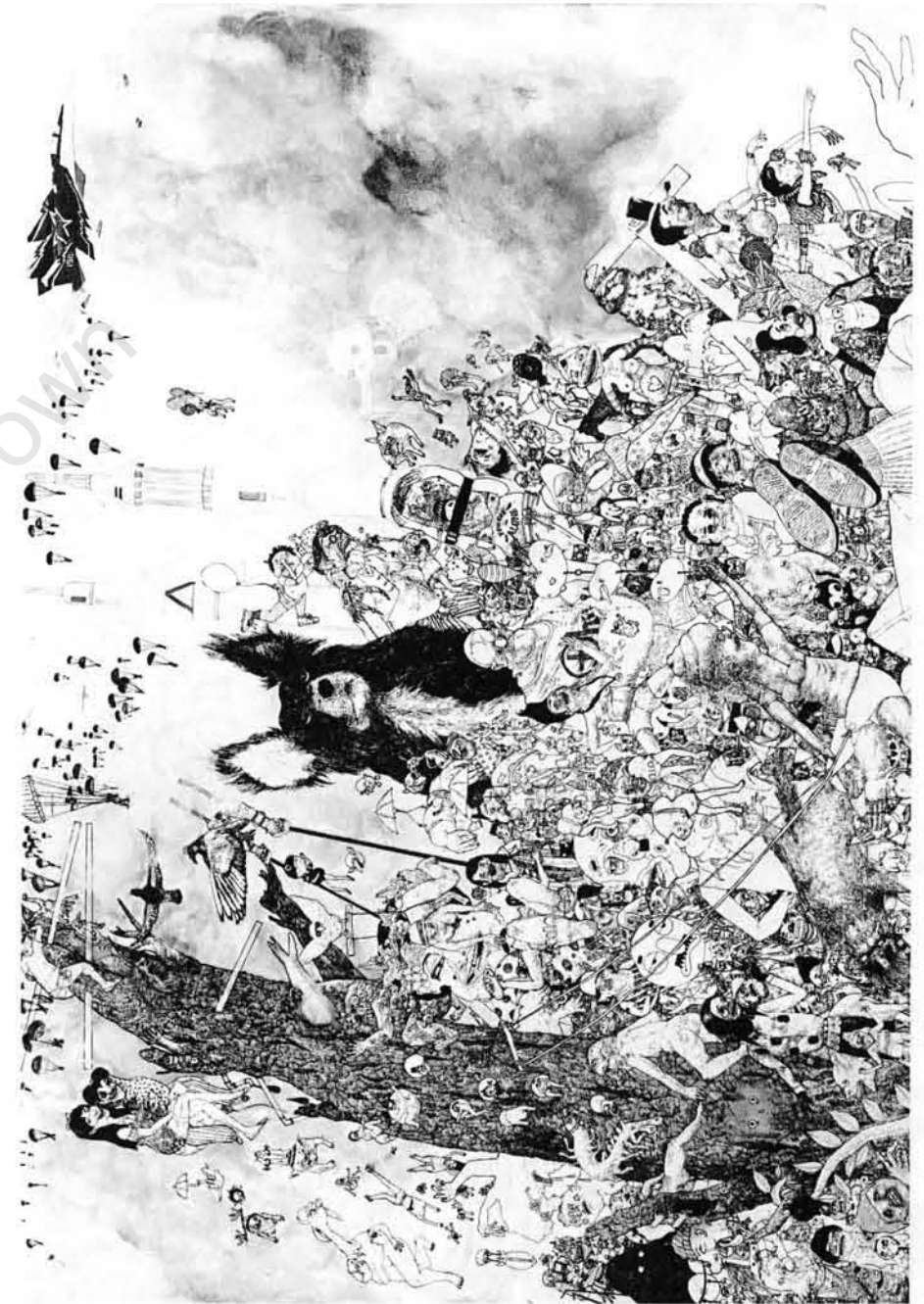


(top) B.B.76.1.  
(bottom) B.A.42.1.

421

*something to do; space-time (striated);  
popular opposites; people; misery;  
prophesy*

(Below and following pages) pen, acrylic, ink  
and enamel on board (March 2008-January  
2009).









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# **APPENDIX A**

## **A USER'S GUIDE TO THE INDULGENCE AND EXHAUSTION OF THE MEANINGLESS VOICE**

*The user's guide to the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* was included in the submission of this project as a general introduction to its functioning as a whole.

While the original intention was to exclude the user's guide from any further publication of the dissertation given the absence of the box (part B), the value of its structural emphasis to an understanding of the overall project overrides this inconvenience.

The description of the individual parts and their interrelation, particularly parts A (the index of keywords) and C (the chronology), as well as the content of part B (the box) all of which are documented within the chronology, will also assist the navigation of this document if read in accordance with the current format. Where relevant, hand annotations are provided to aid this process.

# A USER'S GUIDE TO THE INDULGENCE AND EXHAUSTION OF THE MEANINGLESS VOICE

## 1. Introduction

The *indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* is a loosely collated assemblage of utterances, generated and accumulated over the last two and a half years through a critically reflexive, studio-based and collaboratively oriented research practice. Borrowing and appropriating orphan thoughts from critical theory to philosophy to psychoanalysis and contemporary art theory, the resulting collection has been reduplicated over the past six months and is now housed in its entirety in a wooden box.

Having begun with the aim of developing a method or mode of practice that could sustain itself beyond the parameters of a brief, whether self or otherwise produced, the *indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* is primarily interpretable in its current state as a chronicle of this process. Indulgent, exhausting, and embarrassing, it is nevertheless a document of what has been done.<sup>1</sup> In spite of its various weaknesses, the potentially redeeming feature of the project is that it remains properly experimental, the logic of which values failure and success on an equal level and takes what it can from each.

Beginning with a condensed introduction to a few of the various preoccupations that have motivated the project and ending with a user's guide to the box itself, the following text is intended as an interpretative tool or aid from which the first real barometer or reading of the experiment can emerge.

## 2. Processes, preoccupations and modes of practice

### 2.1. The expression of "there is nothing to express..."

To begin with, there is the idea that there is "nothing to express, nothing from which to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" (Beckett & Duthuit 1965: 103). The statement occurs within one of Samuel Beckett's dialogues with Georges Duthuit as a practical injunction (the job of expression becoming the expression of its incapacity to do its job, to pass its own impassable path) and was adopted as such at a relatively early point in this project. Its pungency is enough to create a movement that advances valiantly and retreats indifferently in a single step. It is this simultaneous movement and lack of movement that characterizes the project at large.

Although the above idea cannot be positioned as the central proposition of the project, it does create a point of convergence to which many of the different processes that have emerged within it can be tracked.

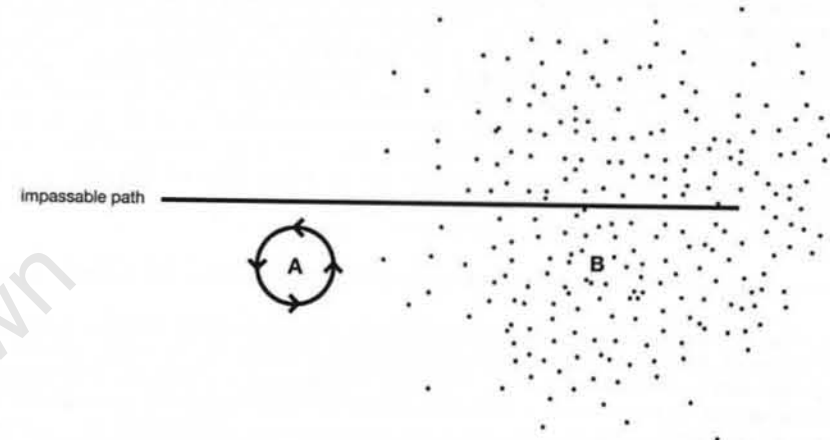
It points first of all to an interest in expression and the employment of language as a largely muddled endeavour.<sup>2</sup> Following it further, it points to the need for a mode of practice that could either side step such an impasse or find a way to work while standing still. As discussed below, both of these alternatives have been tried and tested, the latter proving to be very good at circling itself but very bad at everything else and the former proving to be very good at arriving on the other side of the impasse but entirely inept at explaining how or when it got there, where exactly it is, or how to get back.

In terms of a methodology or a mode of practice, the attempt to find ways to work whilst standing still amounted to a decision to submit wholeheartedly to the circular dynamic of the injunction at hand (the obligation to express that 'there is nothing to

<sup>1</sup> Fluctuating from an incredible sense of heroic entitlement to a distressing awareness of having behaved like a hysteric, to a calm and myopic sense of being ushered along remotely, the combination of moods that have characterized the project are now at a point that identifies with the opening lines of Antonin Artaud's last public reading: "I put myself in your place, and I see very well that what I am saying isn't interesting at all, it's still theatre. What can I do to be truly sincere?" From *The Story Lived by Artaud Momo*, cited by Catherine Dale (2002: 85).

<sup>2</sup> This points in turn towards a backgrounded conception of language inherited from structuralism and poststructuralism, from Ferdinand De Saussure's arbitrary nature of the sign to Jacques Lacan's assertion that language is not a code, from the happy performatives of J.L. Austin to the unhappy performatives of Jacques Derrida, from the primacy to the iterability to the endlessly babbling and unstoppable excess of the signifier.

express' without any means to express it). Having capitalized on the very limited movement that such a dynamic allows, it circled itself endlessly, 'wheeling about with one foot nailed to the ground'. On a more apparent level, it took the need for an observable materialization or manifestation, an expression, or an MFA submission, and made a series of statements on the impossibility of doing just that.<sup>3</sup>



The other option, namely the attempt to side step the impasse rather than passing it, emerged from within the above process and encouraged a movement that is slightly harder to trace. Having faced the problem of expressing the expression that there is nothing to express, and having circled it, it set about finding other nothings to express instead. At some point, after wandering for months, it found itself on the other side of the impasse. It follows necessarily that the realization of its location came only after having reencountered the impasse, albeit from a different side. It is impossible to say, therefore, how it crossed it.

The beneficiaries (or possibly the patrons) of this second process (which is itself a beneficiary of the first) are a series of subsidiary processes that have somehow amounted to a practice. Two of these are discussed below. Having emerged from a position or state of being that had already given up on the expression of anything in particular, they are however only half-aware of their status as processes and even less assured of their validity as practical propositions. Nevertheless, they are useful according to the aims of this document.

### 2.1.1. Confusion as a generative strategy

The first of these subsidiary processes, labeled generally as productive confusion, is the cultivation of confusion as a productive state within a research process.<sup>4</sup> Operating in conjunction with an indiscriminate approach to potential areas of interest, the use of confusion as a generative tool was inspired primarily by the unpredictable dynamic of artistic collaboration and the various legacies of chance and 'canned chance' processes within both art and literary history.<sup>5</sup>

The use of confusion to sometimes productive and sometimes debilitating ends within the scope of this project is well documented throughout its various articulations. The primary drawback of its functionality as a research tool is however its lack of a structure or position from which show or speak of its findings.

<sup>3</sup> It is potentially helpful to add another of Beckett's statements here, also taken from the dialogues, concerning his dream of an art that is "unresentful of its insuperable indigence and too proud for the farce of giving and receiving" (Beckett & Duthuit 1965: 112).

<sup>4</sup> The idea of productive confusion was first encountered in a column in *Frieze* by Jennifer Higgie (2007b: sp) titled 'It ain't easy, how confusion can be creative'.

<sup>5</sup> Stretching from Tzara, Ball, Arp and Taueber-Arp's Dada to that of Picabia, Baader and Haussman to Kurt Schwitters's Merz, from Yves Klein and Daniel Spoerri to George Brecht, from Gutai to Fluxus to Piero Manzoni to Ben Vautier to Gabriel Orozco, from John Cage to Gelitin, from Bryon Gysin and Jack Kerouac to Dambuzo Marechera, the best example of chance as a productive medium that can be offered here is still that of Marcel Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-14). The next best example, which comes from an altogether different source but follows a similar strain of thought, is the investigatory practice of Agent Cooper in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*.

### 2.1.2. The utterance as a model unit of expression and practice

Functioning partially as a solution to the above dilemma, the second subsidiary process is a mode of constructing and reading the manifestations of expression in whatever form (objects, words, sounds or images) as self-revelatory utterances.<sup>6</sup> As an offshoot of producing in a state that could not locate itself or its intentions, let alone communicate them, the idea of an 'utterance' is quite simply the idea of an expression that is what it says it is. Borrowing heavily from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his collaborations with Felix Guattari, the most important feature of the utterance is that its existence is limited to that which it reveals in its articulated form. It is, in other words, entirely flat – it does not contain anything other than what it presents in its articulation of itself and there is thus no question of an obscured or hidden meaning or a badly executed intention.<sup>7</sup> As a model designation for that which is offered or put forward, the utterance is therefore entirely conducive to the production and reception of a collection of things that remain otherwise unrelated and/or inoperative as expressions. In this way, this second process becomes a solution in part to the drawback encountered by confusion as a generative process, if only in that it rephrases the dilemma in such a way that the problem is no longer a problem but a state of affairs or an observation.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2. The Indulgence and Exhaustion of the Meaningless Voice as a reduplication of what has been done

From the plangency of Beckett's injunction to the progressive but otherwise untraceable movement of the utterance as a preferable model for expression, the combined legacy of the above processes is a project that is willfully cursed by confusion and that has nothing to say for itself other than what it says. In one way, *the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* can therefore be interpreted in part as an experiment in confusion – an attempt to lower the cost of expression and/or creative production by neutering its aims as the expression or transference of something other than itself.<sup>9</sup> In another way, *the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* can be read as a repetition, a rehashed expression of everything that has happened, is happening, within its very flexible borders. It is, as said above, a reduplication in that it presents itself in a form that does not purport to document or describe the objects it contains. *The Indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* is therefore less a chronicle of what has been done than an attempt to present everything anew at once – to create a flat space that can offer each individual articulation as an utterance.

### 3. Structural considerations and interrelations between parts

#### 3.1. A cockpit and a constellation

As indicated above, the structures that form *the indulgence and exhaustion of the meaningless voice* are intended to function in conjunction to form a flat space, offering each individual articulation the opportunity to present itself according to the logic of an utterance. The 'flatness' of the space is necessitated by the fact that the utterance, which offers only its immediately apparent form (its surface) as a space for interpretation, cannot be inserted into a position that presupposes what it has to say or speaks on its behalf. It must be allowed to stay confused and be confusing. As such, a collection of utterances relies on a compartmentalization or structure that does not do anything other than allocate space. The 'flatness' of the space is also necessitated by the fact that the collection must be able to present itself as a whole, in its entirety, all at once.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'self-revelatory' is an appropriation (or rather, a misappropriation) from an article on nihilism and art by James Leroy Smith (1975: 329) who writes of the distinction between art and philosophy "from a Platonic standpoint" – philosophy is distinguished as a discourse that separates revelation from revealing, while art, like poetry, occupies a discourse where that which is revealed is identical to its revelation.

<sup>7</sup> Another helpful proposition contained within the notion of the utterance is the abolishment of metaphor. Taken primarily from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) where the abolishment of metaphor leads to the creation of a 'a plane of consistency'; a space where "a semiotic fragment rubs shoulders with a chemical interaction, an electron crashes into language..." (69) and where "one can finally speak 'literally' of anything at all, a blade of grass, a catastrophe or sensation, calmly accepting that which occurs when it is no longer possible for anything to stand for anything else" (198). A second reference that the notion of the utterance appropriates is the assertion by Georges Bataille (quoted in Krauss 1999: 5) that "words should have jobs rather than definitions".

<sup>8</sup> The dilemma of productive confusion and the cacophony that it results in stems primarily from the attempt to create something other than what has already been articulated or found, to make a cohesive or clear whole out of something that is confusing. The use of the second process as both an approach to practice and a suggestion for interpretation offers a way out of this in that it allows each independent utterance to speak for itself, thus allows things a space to simply be what they are. The solution of a cohesive whole is therefore no longer necessary, and the problem is therefore no longer a problem.

<sup>9</sup> This rephrasing of the dynamic of the various processes described above is associated within the project to the shift from investing in art and artistic production as something to believe in, to an investment in art and artistic production as something to do.

The prerequisite for a collection of such articulations or objects is therefore that it attempts to operate as a both a constellation and a cockpit.<sup>10</sup>

As will be explained in the following section, the primary divisions of the project have attempted as much as possible to achieve this a structure of this kind. On encountering the project itself, it becomes evident that a host of other foibles and preoccupations exist, from the exploitation of every structural attribute as an opportunity to create something else (where the structures themselves become utterances) and the outsourcing of decisions to third parties, to the consistent sabotage of any urge to *assist* the utterances by glossing over or overinflating them (they do not need any help and must be allowed to flounder).

#### 3.2. Unpacking the box

The box is divided into an upper and lower half. Once it has been opened, each half should be placed lying flat with its open side facing upwards.

##### 3.2.1. Bottom, Tray A (B.A.1-70) and Tray B (B.A.71-102)

The lower half of the box houses a collection of found, made and received objects contained within two wooden trays. Although the presentation of the objects contained within the trays suggests a collection, it is important to note here that the project did not begin with ideas of collecting. The positioning of the objects as a collection began somewhere in the middle of the process and arrived with an idea of the leftover as that which stands over and survives.<sup>11</sup>

The trays are placed one on top of the other with Tray B lying on top of Tray A, and can be lifted out of the box using the rope handles. Both trays are compartmentalized into various smaller sections, each of which has a number stuck into the bottom. The perspex lids are removable and can be dislodged using the semi-circular indentations as grips (or a hand placed flat onto the perspex and pushed without pressure in the direction of the grips), then slid out using both hands, taking care to keep the lid straight as it slides out. The lids can be stored sideways or lengthways in the lower half of the box. The lids may be reinserted at any time but should be guided carefully in order to prevent the perspex from knocking against the compartment walls.

Once the lids have been removed the objects should be removed at will and placed wherever for whatever purpose. Each object is marked with a small identification marker or box number. The markers use a prefix (either B.A. or B.B. according to which tray the object belongs in) and a number that corresponds to the number of the object's compartment. It is important that the objects are taken out of the trays; held, handled and examined. While some of the objects are fairly fragile and will need to be removed with care (objects B.B.71.2, B.B.78 and B.A.56 in particular), most of them are surprisingly hardy and can be handled, even mishandled, at the users discretion. With the exception of B.B.75 all of the objects are safe to touch.<sup>12</sup>

##### 3.2.2. Top

The upper half of the box is divided into two sections. The smaller section contains a felt package. The other section, which should be empty, is a placeholder for future content. The content of the felt package is identical to the package you would have received in conjunction with this document. There are three publications: a 430 page book with a mottled apricot cover titled 'The

<sup>10</sup> The ideas of a flat space as a constellation and/or a cockpit are borrowed from the practical methodologies and interests of Anja de Klerk and Josh Ginsburg, two Cape Town based artists that I have collaborated with frequently and who share many of my tactical sympathies. Both of these ideas operate on a practical and interpretative level and are models for showing as much as they are models for reading. The idea of the constellation, where disparate nodes of interest are visible from a particular vantage point, is taken from de Klerk and can also be understood according to the logic of a pinboard. The idea of a cockpit, where objects of interest are positioned around their user as a cave of dashboards, is taken from Ginsburg.

<sup>11</sup> The idea was taken from an article by Jacques-Alain Miller (2007: sp) on Lacan's 'later teaching' where Miller discusses the associative consequences of looking at psychoanalysis as a superstition and reframes the term as a result: "...superstition, as commonly understood, is the cult of a false god. In the correct sense, it is reconstructed in etymology as *superstare*, what is held above. In the figurative sense, it is what survives, what remains, what continues to exist after its progenitors have ceased to be, it is something that describes what survives". The appropriation of Miller's reframing occurs within the project at hand in reference to both superstition and leftovers. The most fortuitous of these being the opportunity to move away from the idea of the art object as an excretion to the idea of the art object as a kidney stone or calcification (the survival of the object that is produced is thereby no longer dependent on its author).

<sup>12</sup> The two stones marked B.B.75. are kidney stones from an ox and were received with a caution against skin contact, they should be kept in their sealed bag but can be removed at the user's own risk.



Indulgence and Exhaustion of the Meaningless Voice', a wire-bound A5 booklet titled 'Index of Keywords' and a set of laminated cards titled 'Object Index'. The 430-page book is an illustrated chronology. The index of keywords is an index that corresponds to the keywords within the chronology document and to the box objects via their illustration in the chronology. The set of A5 laminated cards, labeled 'Object Index; B.A.1- B.B.102' is an illustrated index of each object contained within the lower half of the box.

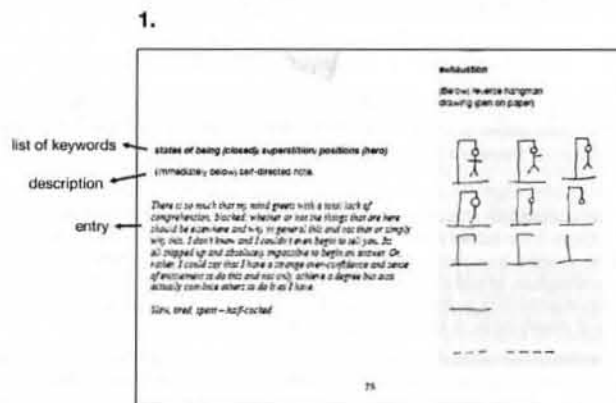
### 3.2.2.1. Chronology

While the box and its internal structure could solve the problem of combining and compartmentalizing the three-dimensional content of the project without imposing an additional logic, the problem of somehow negotiating a method of navigation for the two-dimensional content remained. The idea of using a chronological structure to effect a solution in line with that of the box came after constructing a timeline for the exhibition guide to *Dada South?* in 2009.<sup>13</sup> Proving to be superficial in the best possible way, the time-bound structure offered a recognizable and rigid format that could be stretched and made pliant by the disparate and often unassociated content.

The chronology is divided yearly and monthly and runs backwards from the beginning of June 2010 to the beginning of 2008. The content of the chronology has been formatted as a series of 'entries' and incorporates a range of different media including but not limited to: experimental and self-directed written notes, citations or collections of citations, preliminary notes for presentations or reviews, seminar papers and collaborative publications, found images, scanned drawings or notebook sketches, stills from digital animations or videos and photographs documenting events or three-dimensional objects. As will be explained further in the explanation of the index of keywords, the chronology does not need to be read from front to back, it is to be skimmed over, picked up and put down, sat on and sifted through. Each object is included as an utterance of some sort. It is important, therefore, to read each entry with confidence.

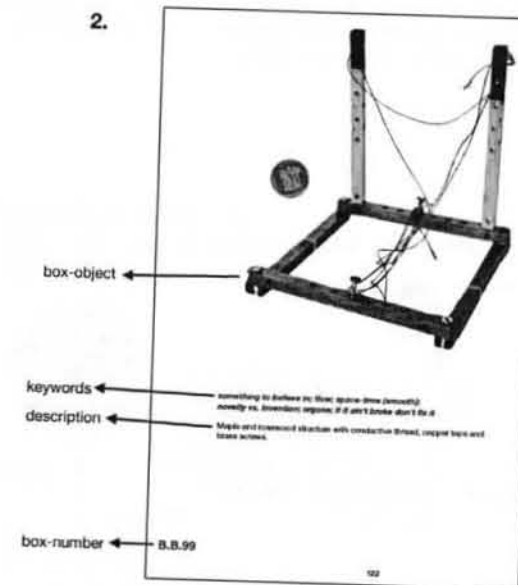
The inclusion of the box objects, as well as various other features of the chronology, serve to extend the reach of the project beyond the already extended logistic limitations of the box, as well as to fill in the gaps left open by the absence of a conventional dissertation within the project.

As illustrated in diagram 1 below, which shows a detail from page 75 in the chronology, each entry begins with a list of keywords and a short contextualizing description of what the entry illustrates (note, drawing, citation etc.). Any content that has been appropriated from another source is attributed within the description to its appropriate author. A standard list of sources consulted is provided at the end of the chronology.



<sup>13</sup> An exhibition at the IZIKO National Gallery (12 December 2009 – 28 February 2010), curated by Kathryn Smith and Roger van Wyk with Lerato Bereng. The complete timeline is illustrated from pages 92-100 of the chronology.

In addition to the standard entries, the chronology also contains illustrations of each box object formatted as an entry, as illustrated diagram 2 below. The box objects are positioned within the chronology according to when they were made, found or received.



### 3.2.2.2. Index of keywords (391 – Zolghadr, Tirdad)

Operating in strict correspondence to the lists of keywords present at the beginning of each chronology entry, the index of keywords is intended to function as an optional and additional navigational tool. It was introduced to the conceived structures of the project at a relatively late stage and appeared initially as an informant of sorts, sneaking in to try and attach things to other things and suggesting the existence of a series of pathways, arguments even, that didn't actually exist. It was evident, however, that the flat structures of the box and the chronology were almost impossible to move through and that something else was needed to jumpstart stalled engagements. In its final form and as a process that has arguably added rather than assisted in alleviating some of the confusion, the index of keywords has taken on a dynamic that is in line with the rest of the project. It is an experiment in direction, thought and weak logic and should be used at the user's discretion.<sup>14</sup> The index is ordered alphabetically with the page numbers listed consecutively after each keyword. Where appropriate, proper names are included as keywords within the chronology, these are inverted in the index (for example, George Baker becomes Baker, George) and printed in pink to distinguish them from other keywords.

### 3.2.2.3. Index of objects (B.A.1 – B.B.102)

In order to assist movement from the actual box objects to the chronology to the index of keywords and so forth, the object index is intended as a further navigational tool. Ordered according to the box numbers of the objects, the object index provides the relevant page number for each object in accordance with its appearance in the chronology.

### 3.3. A trial route

"Let us assume that, however it may have been done, it is done. Let us take it that the bridge is built and crossed, that we can put it out of our mind. We have left behind the territory in which we were. We are in the far territory, where we want to be" (J.M. Coetzee cited by Josh Ginsburg in an unpublished exhibition accompaniment).

<sup>14</sup> "A weaker logic is not less interesting than a stronger logic, in fact it is much more interesting, because it is much more difficult to make it stick...but it holds up all the same" (Lacan 2008: 32).

END\*



## INDEX OF KEYWORDS

391 113  
/+=X 29, 30

## A

abstraction 107, 189, 254, 272  
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